

PENN'S COUNTRY

E. S. ROSCOE

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PENN'S COUNTRY



WILLIAM PENN

PENN'S COUNTRY

BEING

LITERARY AND HISTORICAL STUDIES
OF THE COUNTRY OF
PENN, MILTON, GRAY, BURKE, AND THE DISRAELIS

BY

E. S. ROSCOE

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP

REVISED AND ENLARGED EDITION

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QUAKER CONTENT

PREFATORY NOTE

THE district sometimes called South Buckinghamshire, extending from the northern edge of the Chiltern Hills to the river Colne on the borders of Hertfordshire and Middlesex, is remarkable for its associations with men of letters and statesmen. In this respect it is supreme in rural England. It is with these personal associations, their form and their results, that the following pages are concerned. Originally containing only a few sketches, this book has continued to grow until in this edition it presents to a reader, or to a wanderer in the locality on which it touches, the interesting connection between many famous men—divergent in character and career—and the several places in this portion of Buckinghamshire wherein their

lives were partly passed. The commonly bare enumeration of a relation between some noteworthy man and a particular place is valueless, for it assumes that the reader has a knowledge which few possess, and a capacity of imagination which is rare. On the other hand, there is no more agreeable pastime than to re-create from stated facts scenes of bygone days in places which are much unchanged, and to stimulate the imagination to realize the personal aspects of a locality. In this respect, men so opposite as William Penn and Benjamin Disraeli, as Milton and Shelley, not to mention others written of in these pages, give unusual personal value to a district admirable also for its natural charm.

I am indebted to the proprietors of *Country Life*, *The Sphere* and *the Treasury* respectively, for permission to reprint the chapters—The Homes of the Disraelis, Milton at Horton, and Shelley and his Circle at Marlow.

E. S. R.

March, 1914.

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* This is probably the latest MS. copy which Gray made of this poem before publication. It was formerly in the possession of the Rev. William Mason, who was Gray's executor; it was bequeathed by him to Mr. Stonehewer and, with the rest of the Gray MSS., was left by him to Pembroke College. An earlier draft is now in the possession of the Provost and Fellows of Eton College, to whom it was bequeathed by the late Sir William Fraser. A copy by Gray of this draft is in the British Museum.

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CHAPTER I.

PENN'S COUNTRY :

THE VILLAGE OF PENN : THE BEGINNING.

IT is often difficult to separate in one's mind a place from a personality ; they are so connected that one cannot think of the place without the man. A large space of one life need not necessarily, however, have been passed in one place, though sometimes a long connection between a life and a locality is the main link between them, as between Cowper and Olney. Usually, however, some distinguishing circumstances have caused one spot to become environed by an individuality. The shade of Gray hovers about the elm-shaded graveyard at Stoke Poges, the subject of his Elegy. There he is buried ; it is the last resting-place of his family ; and these facts are supplemented by

another more uncommon—Gray's mental temperament was in unison with the serene charm of this English churchyard. And, turning to one who is for ever associated with Buckinghamshire, William Penn,¹ it is not in the flourishing State which bears his name that we feel in contact, personally, as it were, with him. There he is a great, but to most Englishmen a shadowy, figure; but amid the wooded slopes, the secluded villages, of the Buckinghamshire uplands we recall his vigorous and strenuous youth, his persistent and courageous struggle for his faith, the events of his early life. At the Grange, on the slope above Chalfont St. Peter, he courted Gulielma Springett, the step-daughter of Isaac Pennington, the patient and high-minded Quaker, and, after the Penningtons were deprived of their property, at their home at Amersham. In 1672 he was married to her in a farm-house called King's, near Chorleywood, on the borders of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and the first months of married life

¹ See note A.

were passed at the adjoining little town of Rickmansworth. At Jordans, under the shade of the fragrant limes, he is buried, and by him lie his first and second wife and six of his children.

Three miles distant from Jordans is the village of Penn, once the home, as has been assumed, of the elder branch of the family of Penn. Yet only a little of the vigorous existence of William Penn was passed in these quiet parts, and he came to them—to the country of his ancestors—by the merest chance, persecution brought the young Quaker to friendly homes. But, though he came as a stranger to it, one always thinks of this corner of England as Penn's country.

Many reasons tend to this estimate, for when Penn first came to the Chalfonts these villages were the centres of a remarkable Quaker feeling, with which Penn is inseparably connected, and of which, with its mingled elements of an unbending individualism and of good sense, he is most characteristic. To this must be added something of romance which attaches to his marriage

with Gulielma Springett. She was so reserved, and yet so winning in mind and body, so kindly and well-mannered ; she lived so peacefully in the Misbourne Valley, till, in Ellwood's resigned language, "he came for whom she was reserved"—the young Quaker, manful and overflowing with vitality and strength, fearing no one, and capable above most men of bending the affairs of this life to his will, who carried her forth like a sweet flower from an old-fashioned garden into a very troubled life. And then, years after, there is Penn's final home-coming, after a strenuous and a combative life, to the secluded graveyard, to rest with the wife whom he had won not far off in his early manhood.

That Penn would desire to be buried near the village of Penn cannot be doubted. No direct evidence connects him with the family who took their name from it, but he believed that he was sprung from the Penns of Penn. On the monument to the memory of his father, the Admiral, in the Church of St. Mary Redcliffe at Bristol, which quaintly

and touchingly tells how this able sailor, "with a gentle and even gale and in much peace, arrived and anchored in his last and best port," we read that he was the son of Giles Penn of the Penns of Penn Lodge, in the county of Wilts,¹ and "those Penns of Penn, in the county of Bucks." This inscription was probably written by, or at the

¹ The church and parsonage house of Minety were in Wiltshire, the rest of the parish in Gloucestershire; but the whole parish is now, by Act of Parliament, incorporated with Wiltshire. Penn Lodge seems to have been in Wilts, but the Penns apparently owned property and also resided in Gloucestershire. See Aubrey's "Wiltshire," and Rudder's "Gloucestershire." William Penn was directly descended from

William Penn of Minety.

William Penn of Minety, yeoman (d. 1591)

William Penn = Margaret Rastall

(Law-clerk)

Giles Penn = Joan Gilbert

William Penn = Margaret Jasper
(Admiral)

William Penn.

See the "Family of William Penn," by Howard M. Jenkins, Philadelphia.

direction of, his son, for the style resembles that of Penn himself.

An old church of flint and brick, with a sturdy fourteenth-century tower and a small graveyard, edged with a row of trees ; a few cottages, one with a faded signboard, hanging above an ancient porch, on which is painted a large yellow crown ; two elms on a strip of greensward, one almost lifeless, are clustered on the summit of a long hill uprising from among beech-woods broken by fields of yellowing corn and sun-dried pasture. Beyond the village, as one passes along the road to Loudwater and High Wycombe, one perceives—almost with surprise—a few pleasant, old-fashioned houses, ivy-clad or covered with roses. This row of sober eighteenth-century dwellings attached to this little hamlet is quite unexpected. You have fallen into a past age, and half expect to find a gentleman in a long brown coat and embroidered waistcoat open the white wicket. Indeed, it would not be altogether surprising to hear the sound of a horse's hoofs, and see William Penn on his



PENN CHURCH

way to Wycombe to defend his faith by a public disputation with Ives the Baptist. The last of these buildings, the manor-house, though not the original structure, recalls days when the Penns of Penn were the owners of a comfortable if not extensive estate. Perceptible among the trees at the foot of the northern slope are the tiled roofs of the farmstead of Putnam Place, the whole—church, village, manor-house, and farm—picturesquely and forcibly illustrative of an English rural community in times gone by.

This is Penn on a summer day, little altered by the movements of time or of the world, from which it still seems remote. From the churchyard northward and eastward the hillside slopes down to meet extending woodlands recalling remnants of the dense woods which in the time of the Conqueror extended from the borders of Oxfordshire to the Thames. But descending a little by the London Road, from a turn in it there is a glimpse of the white tower of Beaconsfield Church, somewhat beyond the

site, indistinguishable among the frequent trees, of Burke's historic home. Southwards a gradual slope, darkened by the summer foliage, descends to the valley of the Thames, whose reaches by Quarry Woods and Marlow are lost in the shimmering sunshine.

The church, with its lack of architectural qualities, gives by its very poverty a character to the village. It recalls the aspect of a poor hamlet, the home of woodcutters, three or four centuries ago among the Chiltern Hills, where below in the rich Thames Valley might be seen the smoke of flourishing communities at Windsor and Eton. To-day Penn is suggestive; still quiet and secluded, in spite of the houses which have sprung up in the adjacent district, impressive with its wide overlook over the surrounding country.

Some places, not wanting in historical association, create disappointment the moment they are seen. This is not so with Penn, which strikes the historic sense at once. One would picture it as the original home of the Penns, though as to this we must be

guided rather by probabilities than by direct evidence.

There were Penns of Penn as long ago as the thirteenth century, for in 1273 William de London was presented to the rectory of Penn by Hugh de Penn. Not, however, until after the middle of the fifteenth century were the actual manorial rights transferred to the Penns by the Berkeleys. This famous family never appreciated their little Buckinghamshire property, and once sold it to the Derbys ; but it was regained by Maurice, Lord of Berkeley, who succeeded his brother in 1492, and is reputed to have recovered forty-six alienated manors. The connection, however, of the Berkeleys with the Manor of Penn is important, since it probably supplies the link between the Gloucestershire and the Buckinghamshire Penns. For one may reasonably surmise that one of the Penns of Penn, animated in an earlier and more limited age by the same adventurous spirit that carried his famous descendant beyond the Atlantic, should journey to the West Country to join

his feudal superior, who had his castle by the Severn Sea, bearing with him the coat of arms of the Buckinghamshire family. But it is sufficient to indicate the connection to raise reasonable probabilities, remembering also that while the personal name clearly takes its origin from the place—by position on a headland of the Chiltern Hills—there is no such reason for the word among the pastures of Gloucestershire, and that there is actual evidence of the existence of an ancient Buckinghamshire family, whilst in the West all traces of the Penns cease with the yeoman of Minety.¹

When the church is entered, with plain white walls and here and there a tablet to some long-dead worthy of the neighbourhood, you presently come at the east end upon the brasses for which you are in search. The first of the Penns to be laid in this

¹ Aubrey states (pp. 7 and 8) that “the Penns had been stewards or relating to the Lord Abbot of Malmesbury,” and “the Penns have been here a long time, but I think but yeomen.” He gives no authority for the first statement.

church were John Penn, who died in 1597, and Ursula his wife. Time has somewhat injured their monument, yet still at your feet is a pleasant-featured man of middle age, with pointed beard and ruff and in plate armour, the figure now broken off at the waist. Opposite to him was the full-length figure of his wife, but the brass has gone from below the breast. The face is that of a cheerful woman still young. Beneath the place to which their feet extend is a quaint but not uncommon group—six children following their father and mother, whose virtues and ages are set out in still existing letters. This somewhat elaborate but pleasing memorial—for these medieval brasses possess a simplicity and a permanence which are the essential merits of a monument—is completed by four Latin lines :—

Horum terreno clauduntur membra sepulchro,
Sed capiunt animas sydera sola pias,
Quos Amor univit, mortis, seperare potestas
Non valuit, junctos cerimus hoc tumulo.

The latest of the monuments of the Penns is that to Roger, Lord of the Manor, the

last of the Penns of Penn, who died unmarried in 1732. Thus his sister, the wife of Sir Nathaniel Curzon, became his heir, and so the estate passed to another family, the two branches of which are to-day represented by Earl Howe and Lord Curzon of Kedleston.

There is yet one other monument which should not be passed over—that to the infant grandchild of William Penn, the son of Thomas Penn, who was buried here in 1753. This simple stone is a link between Penn and Jordans, between the Buckinghamshire and the Gloucestershire Penns, between two families who in thought and in life were so different. William Penn was born in 1644, and thus he and his children were contemporaneous with these Penns of Penn of whom the monuments still exist, though there is no indication of any intercourse between the two families. It is not perhaps surprising, since apart from absence of actual relationship, the one family was that of a squire living quietly and unknown, unconcerned apparently with



WILLIAM PENN (1638), OF PENN

the religious and political movements of the age—*satis beatus unicis Sabinis*—whilst the head of the other was the centre of wide and varied activities. No contrast could be more marked than that between these English gentlemen dwelling in their manor-house in the little village among the Buckinghamshire woodlands, and the four generations of Penns—the Admiral, the founder of Pennsylvania, and his immediate descendants, with their restless, vigorous, and cosmopolitan existence. And yet one can in a summer's afternoon easily ramble through the leafy lanes, with high hedges rich in roses and the trailing wild clematis, or by footpaths through the fields and beech-woods, from the secluded burial-ground of the Friends at Jordans to the village of Penn, from the last resting-place of men who are world famous to that of a race of English gentry typical of many of their class who lived in England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. They were men between great nobles and yeomen, who took no part in public affairs, and

were seldom absent from their quiet homes. Perhaps one may be inclined to moralize at the strange chance which has brought two branches of one family so different in their destinies to rest in the same picturesque English country.

At Penn, too, a pathetic little-known incident in the closing years of Burke and of the eighteenth century has its setting. Burke, who sympathized deeply with the French *émigrés*, assisted them by every means in his power ; his house was always open to them, and many of the most illustrious exiles were his guests. Louis XVIII. himself, and others of the Royal Family, came to Beaconsfield—not three miles from Penn—to thank Burke for what he had done for them. It is, however, in his efforts to help a pitiful remnant from a foreign land that Burke and Penn are associated. In the spring of 1796 a school was by Burke's exertions opened at Penn for the sons or near relatives of French gentlemen who had been killed in the war. It was in a house which until a short time

before had belonged to General Haviland, whose monument may still be seen in the church. It is strange to think of the pleasant rural solitude, in which we have no difficulty in picturing the Penns riding through the flinty lanes to Amersham or Wycombe, invaded by these children of another race, speaking broken English, running to welcome Burke, who, with the same sane and wide-minded benevolence which actuated him when he befriended Crabbe, had rescued them from poverty and distress. They and their teachers looked on him affectionately as their second father. He was a friend and a generous parent, impoverishing his own table to bring delicacies to his protégés. The roomy house held sixty blue-coated boys. An inscription on their caps told of their politics : "Vive le Roi" was impressed on red if a father had fallen in battle, on a black ground if the relative was more distant. It was no easy task to raise the funds for the maintenance of this charity, for Burke's own means were straitened, and he complained

to Mrs. Crewe of the difficulties he encountered. "What!" he wrote to this vivacious person, "with all these Dukes, Marquises, Cabinet Ministers, Secretaries of State, and Secretaries of War, cast-off Lord - Lieutenants of Ireland and their secretaries, cannot this miserable little affair of fifty pounds a month be done between them—with the aid, too, of all the Lady Marchionesses and lady knights of the shire?"¹ In this charming and beautiful woman, whom Charles Fox said he preferred to any other, Burke always found a faithful ally. At last, when his patience had nearly come to an end, a few lines from Pitt placed the expense of the charity on the Treasury. This was but a year before Burke's death. He made, however, every provision he could for the French orphans, adding a codicil to his will in which he commended them to the care of Pitt and other political friends. What was the end of it—this flourishing school, the pupils of which in the carelessness of childhood, forgetful of the tragedy of

¹ Burke's Works, ii: 334.

which they were the victims, and little mindful of the future, marched so proudly and joyously in military array through the thick hedgerows and on the woodland paths around the pretty hilltop of Penn—we know not. Burke's personal interest gone, there was little to support public interest in this institution; the work undertaken by the kindly statesman would drop, and the homeless waifs whom he had helped and tended would be thrown again upon the world.

All signs of the house have now disappeared, but still at the end of the village, half a mile from the church, children sometimes point out the French school meadow, which in the minds of a few of the people of the place a vague tradition connects with some bygone and long-forgotten seminary. Yet this episode in the life of Burke, at once singular and touching, adds to the interest of Penn, for this English hamlet on its remote hilltop is associated alike with Penn and with Burke, with the beginnings of the United States and with the end of the old régime in France.

CHAPTER II.

PENN'S COUNTRY :

CHALFONT ST. PETER, AND RICKMANS- WORTH—THE MARRIAGE.

A MILE or more from Uxbridge the small river Misbourne, which has come down from the Chiltern Hills, joins the Colne. Thence its upward course passes through a gently sloping valley, and it is not till the road has been traversed for six miles that Peters Chalfont, as it is called by the people of the place, is reached, snugly nestled in the bottom on each side of the stream which divides the village. From the side of the valley beyond the village one sees the grey tower of St. Giles, half hidden among the trees, and the warm tints of the tiled cottages by which it is surrounded.

Those who pass along the main road from Uxbridge to Amersham see the Grange on

their left hand as they enter the village of Chalfont St. Peter, standing among trees and gardens on the slope of the hill. At the time when it comes into the story of William Penn's life it was the home of Isaac Pennington the younger, to whom it had been given by his father on his marriage in 1654. Pennington was a man of some substance, the eldest son of Alderman Isaac Pennington, of London, ex-Lord Mayor and one of King Charles' judges, who had died in the Tower in 1661. The younger Pennington was a person of considerable intelligence and culture, delicate in body, but strong in mind. For the faith which he had embraced he suffered privation and imprisonment. For instance, towards the end of the year 1665 he "was taken out of his house in an arbitrary manner by military force, and carried prisoner to Aylesbury Gaol again, where he lay three-quarters of a year with great hazard of his life, it being the sickness year, and the Plague being not only in the town, but in the gaol." Nine months' imprisonment for a delicate man,

accustomed to the comparative refinement of the period, was a severe punishment for Nonconformity, and vividly brings out the character of the times. It was in secluded country places that the effect of such statutes as the Act against the Quakers and the Conventicles Act was most severely felt. The country Justice was omnipotent; he detested Nonconformists. The Legislature had in these two Acts put a weapon into his hands which he was only too pleased to use; and the treatment which Pennington suffered—not in this instance only, but over and over again—had to be borne by many Quakers.

Isaac Pennington's wife had been the widow of Sir William Springett. She was a woman with a kind heart and a sound head. It was her daughter, Gulielma Springett, who became the wife of William Penn. In those days she was, to quote Thomas Ellwood's description of her, "completely comely," and not less attractive in mind than in body. There were younger children yet at the Grange, the offspring of

Lady Springett's second marriage, and Ellwood was at this time their tutor. In the history of his life there are ample materials from which to form an estimate of his character. But the value of his history lies in the graphic and simple picture which it gives of the early Quakers, and of the state of society in some noticeable phases in the country districts of England. The son of a country gentleman in the south of Oxfordshire, Ellwood was a young man of intelligence, with a strong wish to acquire knowledge. It was this desire for education which made him acquainted with Milton in 1662, when Ellwood was only twenty-three. His father, who seems to have been a kindly and honourable man in most respects, was wholly unable to rise above the prejudices of the times in regard to religious conformity. When his son avowed himself a Quaker, he did his best to bring him back into the true Church by treatment which a Squeers might adopt towards an obstinate schoolboy. He boxed his ears, he thrashed him with his cane, he threw away his hat—because the

lad kept it on in his presence—he shut him up in his room ; and when all this proved useless, he treated him with studied indifference. It was, therefore, the most natural thing in the world that Thomas Ellwood should be continually with the Penningtons. They had been old friends before either they or Ellwood became Quakers ; they were kind and cultivated people, and they had a beautiful and charming daughter. To all intents and purposes they were affectionate parents to Ellwood. They made arrangements, when he showed so strong a wish to acquire more knowledge, for him to go to London and visit Milton in Jewin Street, and read Latin works aloud to him, the difficult passages of which were explained by the master.

But Ellwood had not been long in London before, in consequence of attending a meeting of Friends in Aldersgate, he was imprisoned in the Fleet Street Bridewell and in Newgate. Anyone who wishes to know what imprisonment without hard labour was like in those days will find a graphic but

true description in Ellwood's history ; with that subject, however, we are not now concerned. It was the end of the year before he was released, and then he was soon at Chalfont. One evening as he sat with Pennington by his bedroom fire—for the latter was out of health—Pennington asked him if he would teach his children the rudiments of Latin. He consented, and so Ellwood found a permanent home at the Grange. His admirable character is shown by his behaviour in regard to Guli Springett. He was "sensible of the real and innate worth and virtue which adorned that excellent dame," and he was not "so devoid of natural heat as not to feel some sparklings of desire as well as others." But he felt that the open trustfulness with which the Penningtons allowed him to find a companion in their daughter would be betrayed if he thought of more than friendship ; and so, says he, "I governed myself in a free yet respectful carriage towards her, that I thereby both preserved a fair reputation with my friend, and enjoyed as much of her favour

and kindness in a virtuous and firm friendship as was fit for her to show, or for me to seek." This resolution shows his acute conscientiousness, and the steady firmness with which it was carried out bears witness to his honourable and sturdy character. For seven years—till his marriage with Mary Ellis in October, 1669—Ellwood was an inmate of the Grange, except when he was lodged in Aylesbury Gaol or in the house of correction at Wycombe.

Pennington's house was always open to Friends. His brother William was a merchant in London, and was a frequent visitor at the Grange; with him came others of the same opinions as himself. The kind of freemasonry existing in a persecuted sect caused any hospitable house to be known; and it was probably in the first place by some chance visit that William Penn became in time a frequent inmate at the Grange. Though descended, as I have already said, from the Penns of Penn—but a few miles distant—he had no local connection with the place; his father's pro-

perty was in Cork, his home in London. It was about 1668 that William Penn, then twenty-four years of age, became acquainted with Isaac Pennington. For two years next to nothing is known of this friendship. But in September, 1670, Penn was prosecuted, together with one Meade, at the Old Bailey in London, for an unlawful conspiracy by addressing a meeting contrary to the Conventicles Act. It was a remarkable trial, for the jury refused to convict the prisoners, and finally jury and prisoners were alike fined for contempt of court. In default of payment they were all committed to prison, but Penn's fine was paid by his father, now prostrated by his last illness. Sir William Penn lived but a short time after the release of his son, and there can be little doubt that the young man then found a kindly and acceptable hospitality at the Grange. It would be difficult to imagine one more likely to attract the love of a woman of capacity and spirit than young Penn—eager, able, and enthusiastic, high-spirited and high-couraged, half martyr and

half hero, mingling the single-mindedness of the apostle with the practical energy of the man of affairs. It was not long, however, before—on one of his visits to London to Wheeler's Meeting-house—he was again in trouble. He refused to take the Oath of Allegiance, and was committed to prison for six months. In confinement Penn's mind and pen were active as ever. He wrote "The Great Case of Liberty of Conscience," and other pamphlets. On his release he went to Holland, returning at the end of 1671. He hastened to Chalfont, and on April 4 of the following year William Penn and Gulielma Springett were married at a farm house called "Kings," near Chorlewood in Hertfordshire. Their new home was Basing House, in the little Hertfordshire town of Rickmansworth, among the meadows by the Colne. It was but four and a half miles from Chalfont St. Peter, and busy though Penn was—preaching and proselytizing—there can be no manner of doubt that he and his wife would often pass over the rough country lanes, which led

across the Northern heights of the valley of the Colne to Buckinghamshire and visit the Penningtons and their friends who gathered at the Grange. At Rickmansworth they lived for five years, and then they passed away into a larger world, where Penn's enthusiasm, energy, and capacity were to make his name famous in the old and in the New World.

CHAPTER III.

PENN'S COUNTRY :

JORDANS : THE END.

THE church and chapel of Chenies, the burial-place of so many generations of Russells, is sometimes the object of a pilgrimage by those who happen to take a pleasure in the delightful scenery of the Valley of the Chess, or who wish to see a place of no little historical interest. But not many miles from Chenies, almost in the middle of what are sometimes called the Buckinghamshire Uplands, is another burial-place, certainly not less interesting than Chenies, and equally pleasing to the lover of sylvan scenery. This is the burial-ground of the Society of Friends, at Jordans—a place some three miles to the east of Beaconsfield. Were it merely the burial-ground



THE BURIAL GROUND AT JORDANS

of a few undistinguished members of this sect, it might well have received little notice ; but as the last resting-place of William Penn and Isaac Pennington it has long been a shrine for the Quakers of the present age, and is a place full of interest to anyone who cares at all for the history or religious movements of his country. Jordans, as it is called, is not a village. It lies near the western end of the parish of Chalfont St. Giles, and is at the present time a disused burial-ground, with an old brick meeting-house and a cottage attached to it. Isaac Pennington's son speaks of it as the burial-place of Friends belonging to Chalfont's Meeting, called Jordans. Ellwood, in his autobiography, written in 1683, tells how in 1670, after the passing of the Conventicle Act, a couple of informers intended to watch the meeting "then holden at the house of William Russell, called Jourdans, in the parish of Giles Chalfont, in the county of Bucks." This is the building, once a farmhouse, still standing in good repair on the hillside, above the burial-ground ; for the

chapel was not built till 1688. A single rood of land had been purchased in 1671, and used as a burial-ground, until more ground was obtained for a meeting-house.

Ellwood's simple narrative of the occurrence here narrated exemplifies, better than the most vivid general description of the times can do, the persecution which the first Quakers underwent. He tells how a broken-down butcher of Salisbury, Poulter by name, and a certain Ralph Lacy of Risborough, surnamed the Cow-Stealer, made plans to inform against the Quakers of Buckinghamshire. Poulter went to a meeting at Jordans on July 24, but—being probably half-drunk—he “behaved himself with such impetuous violence and brutish rudeness as gave occasion for inquiry who or what he was. And being soon discovered to be the *trepan*, so infamous and abhorred by all sober people,” an outcry was raised against him, and he, “leaving his part to be acted by others, quitted the country as soon as he could.” But his place was soon supplied by as great a rascal as himself.

This was "one Richard Airs, a broken ironmonger of Wiccomb," who had not long before been tried for a kind of conspiracy to commit a highway robbery. "Lacy the Cow-Stealer," continues Ellwood, "having thus got Airs, the intended highwayman, to be his comrade, they came on the 21st of the month called August, 1670, to the Meeting of the people called Quakers, where Lacy with Poulter had been a month before ; and taking for granted that the same who had been there before would be there then, they went to a Justice of the Peace, called Sir Thomas Clayton, and swore at all adventure against Thomas Zachary and his wife." As a matter of fact, neither the man nor his wife was at this meeting, but at this moment were in London. In his absence he was fined £10 for his supposed offence, and £10 for that of his wife, and a warrant to levy a distress on his goods for the amount was issued by Sir Thomas Clayton. Zachary, as was natural, appealed against this sentence to the Quarter Sessions. It would probably have been better for him

had he taken his unjust sentence without active opposition, for when he brought his appeal, for some legal formality, before Sir Thomas Clayton, the two fell into some discussion on the matter. Zachary let slip a remark that the righteous were oppressed, and that the wicked went unpunished ; " which the Justice, interpreting to be a reflection on the Government, and calling it a high misdemeanour, required sureties of the good man to answer it at the next Quarter Sessions, and in the meantime to be bound to his good behaviour. But he, well knowing himself to be innocent of having broken any law, or done in this matter any evil, would not answer the Justice's unjust demand, and therefore was sent forthwith a prisoner to the county gaol." The upshot of the affair was that at the next Quarter Sessions Zachary's appeal was successful. Nevertheless he was brought up on the last charge, and on the interposition of Sir Thomas Clayton with the Bench remanded for another term of imprisonment. Then Ellwood prosecuted and convicted the

informers of perjury, and they fled the country ; but unfortunate Zachary was required to take the Oath of Allegiance which, as Quakers refuse to take any oath, it was well known he would refuse, " by which snare he was kept in prison a long time after, and, so far as I remember, until a general pardon released him." Such was one instance out of many of the persecution of the Quakers—a picture of the period.

When we think of a few peaceful and honest Friends meeting to worship in this quiet spot in the days of Ellwood and of Penn, it is just as well, for the sake of historical truth, not to forget the pains and penalties which were constantly undergone by these unoffending men and women, and the continual risk of long and painful imprisonment which everyone ran who had met his co-religionists, for a few moments' prayer together, at Jordans.

Though, as I have said, Penn was buried here, yet in his last days he lived—in broken health—at Ruscombe, on the eastern side of Berkshire, beyond Twyford and Waltham

St. Lawrence, and died there on July 30, 1718. He had purchased the place some time after his final return from America in 1702, and, for the last six years, had lived there in failing health, but in a tranquil retirement in marked contrast to the constant turmoil and mortifications of his previous life. Doubtless he was buried at Jordans, from a wish expressed by him to be placed near his first wife, and in a spot which, from the time when he came to the Chalfonts and saw Gulielma Springett, and Ellwood and Isaac Pennington, must have been full of pleasant personal memories.

The place itself is significant of the hostility which the first Quakers experienced ; it is two miles from either of the Chalfonts, and when it was frequented by Penn and the Quakers from these villages, it must have been a wild and out-of-the-way spot. Even now it seems most still and secluded. In the hollow of one of the little valleys—or “bottoms,” as they are locally called—which are so numerous in the country from the Chilterns to the Colne, four roads con-

verge : from the two Chalfonts (St. Peter and St. Giles), from Beaconsfield, and from Penn, the original starting-place, as I have told, of the Penn family. In the corner between the lanes from the Chalfonts a passer-by to-day sees an oblong piece of ground looking, as he casually glances at it, like a little orchard in which the fruit-trees have died from age or from the shade of the overshadowing trees which border the enclosure. He will hardly take note of the bare and ugly little building by the side and the small cottage attached to it, and the eye will not readily catch the few low plain gravestones which appear among the grass. Yet it is here that William Penn was buried—a fitting spot for one of the first and most remarkable of the Society who made “peace” their watchword. For nothing can be more peaceful than the place. A farmer’s cart passes by, or a carriage is now and again seen in the course of the day ; but the cooing of the wood-pigeons in the thick woods which stretch towards Wilton Park, or the shouts of a farm lad from the

yard at Stone Dean, are generally the only sounds which are heard.

Over the grave of William Penn is a small upright stone, with his name and the date of his death. His first and second wives, Gulielma and Hannah, lie by his side. Not far off are the graves of Isaac Pennington and Thomas Ellwood, two of the most admirable of the first adherents of George Fox. It seems somewhat doubtful if these are the original gravestones ; the figures appear to be of too modern a character, and the incisions too clear, to have withstood the effects of more than a century and a half of rain and decay. That, however, is a small matter : no one will go to Jordans to look at the mere monuments. It will be visited in order to see the burial-place of a man remarkable alike in the history of England and of America, and for the purpose of recalling more vividly than is otherwise possible the first days of the Quaker movement in an age when it attracted the notice of the whole English people. On most days nothing can exceed the rural peace of the place

whatever be the time of year—in spring, when the hedgerows are full of primroses, and the woods and coppices which abound in all these Bucks bottoms are blue with wild hyacinths, or in the autumn—the season of all others to wander about this country—when the beech-woods glow with colour, and the cherry orchards are masses of crimson trees.

On the first Thursday in June a gathering of Friends from all parts is held, and due honour is done to the great Quaker. Sometimes American travellers, with the energy of their nation, find their way to this secluded place, and spend a few moments by the grave of Penn. Once, with a singular absence of any feeling for the *genius loci*, it was proposed to carry off his remains to America—as though the interest of Jordans was in the dry bones themselves which lie under the grass. But in this little valley they are, and are likely to remain.

Those who can find pleasure in things which can be seen without rushing from capital to capital will not do amiss to wander

among the clematis-covered hedgerows and the shady beechwoods to the Friends' burying-ground by Stone Dean, to the grave of William Penn. For, apart from its charming surroundings, Jordans is ever suggestive, for we must be the most prosaic of mortals if it does not quicken our historical imagination, and if the sight of the lowly meeting-house among the trees does not help us to recall, with more vividness than is possible by the perusal of printed books, some memorable religious and social characteristics of a long past age.

CHAPTER IV.

MILTON IN BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

I. *At Horton.*

It is ever a pleasant pastime to trace the influence of locality on literature. The process brings one into personal relations with men of letters, for it reveals glimpses of character and intellectual and emotional predilections. For this reason Horton is, I think, more interesting and more suggestive—one may say more important—in the life of Milton¹ than Chalfont St. Giles.

At Horton, between Datchet and Staines, Milton lived from July, 1632—when he was four and twenty years of age—to April, 1638, in the house to which his father had retired in 1631. He was then on the verge of a famous career, but as yet uncertain of the future. “What am I doing?” he wrote

¹ See note B.

to Diodate on September 23, 1637, "growing my wings and meditating flight; but as yet our Pegasus raises himself on very tender pinions." But during what may be called the Horton period, he wrote "*Il Penseroso*," "*L'Allegro*," "*Comus*," and "*Lycidas*." In these the refined sense of the scholar is apparent in every line, and from our present point of view they are especially interesting because, as was well said by Sir Leslie Stephen, "they are the most perfect record in the language of the impressions made by natural scenery on a thorough scholar." The serene landscape of the Thames Valley, the abundant but not luxurious vegetation, and the soft, low-toned colouring are admirably suited to classical description; and in this immortal verse a robust capacity of enjoyment, a sane and observant intelligence, are equally evident. Whether the poet's mood be grave or gay, outward objects, conspicuous or insignificant, please and satisfy. In his lighter mood he dwells on Windsor and its castled heights, his eye notes its proudest features—its

“towers and battlements.” In more pen-
sive moments the noble chapel of Henry
VII, with its “antique pillars” and “storied
windows” fills his mind.

Horton and its ancient church, amid
meadows and willow-lined streams, and
hedgerow elms, were always agreeable to
Milton ; tranquil and secluded, the village
was not drearily remote. But of Horton
in winter, when the village was enveloped
in mists, and the broad valley was grey and
cheerless, or when the winter sun glim-
mered feebly over the cold meadows, Milton
has left no picture. Unlike Cowper, who
at Olney lived in a place not dissimilar in
many characteristics to Horton, Milton did
not dwell on the dreariness of the season.
Then he was immersed in study, busy with
his books by his fireside, at home with his
father and mother, and it was not till the wil-
lows grew green, and the nightingales sang
again in the copses that he wandered into the
leafy lanes and to the not distant uplands.

Milton's house, like the adjacent manor
house of the Bulstrodes, has disappeared,

for it was pulled down about 1798. There is a tradition that it was opposite the church, but it matters little, for three centuries have hardly changed Horton; and the village church, which here as so often in England preserves memories and traditions, still remains as when Milton worshipped in it. The old doorway with its fine Norman work, the weather-worn Tudor porch, and the dark red-fruited yew trees are there; inside in the chancel is the grave of Milton's mother, with its inscription, barely decipherable, telling of her death in April, 1637.

Though he was a scholar Milton was not a recluse. He loved the open air and keenly enjoyed the country with its scenes of rural labour; he liked animal life and the changing aspects of the landscape—

The russet lawns and fallows grey,
and in summer-time—

The meadows trim with daisies pied.

Active in body, he wandered afield from the low-lying ground and the streamlets of Horton to the high broken land which stretched northwards from the Thames

valley to the limits of the Chiltern Hills, and on a summer holiday he sought "the upland hamlets." One of these was certainly Hedgerley, with its church on the hillside amid its woods and fields, for the Bulstrodes of the manor-house of Horton were intimately connected with this village, hard by which was Bulstrode Park. And he went further, to Chalfont St. Peter and on up the Misbourne valley to Chalfont St. Giles thirteen miles away, where the Vache, the large house above the village, was the home of George Fleetwood, whose brother, Charles, was his intimate friend, the village he was to know so well in after years. Harefield, too, on the edge of and within the County of Middlesex on the ridge overlooking the valley of the Colne, well answers to the description of an upland hamlet. And he doubtless traversed the intervening miles, passing through the little market town of Uxbridge and then along the high land above the Colne till he descended by a gentle incline into the grassy hollow below the village.

On his right at the foot of a pleasant hill stood Harefield Place, an ancient, doubtless an imposing, manor-house, though no description of it remains. After it was destroyed by fire in 1660 a smaller house was built immediately adjoining the site of the first house, and this was demolished about 1800. Beyond it was the church, from which a long sward of green swept upwards to the village. Harefield was then the home of the Dowager Countess of Derby, the widow of Lord Chancellor Ellesmere, a *grande dame* and a patroness of men of letters. Milton surely was welcome at this important mansion, where in the summer of 1602 her favourite Lord Keeper had entertained the great Queen with conspicuous magnificence soon after he purchased the property from Sir Edward Anderson in 1601. The Lord Chancellor, as he had become, died in 1617, and from that time Lady Derby, as she still called herself, made Harefield Place her home, and probably here, in 1634, Milton's masque of Arcades was played. He must have been one of the

spectators gathered about the avenue of elms—we may still imagine the quaint figures, the lively music, and the aged Countess awaiting the players on the timbered slope before the house.

In the church hard by we may recall one of the first women of her age, who is commemorated by an ornate and striking monument. The recumbent figure of the Countess of Derby, who died on January 26, 1636-7, depicted as a young woman in a red robe, lies with coronet on head beneath a curtained canopy which is supported by black marble columns ; above is a coat of arms and below in three niches are effigies of the three daughters of the Countess. How closely the village churches of England are reminiscent of every phase of national history is vividly realized when we regard the monument—as perfect now as it was three centuries ago—of the lady whom Milton honoured in his verse and of her to whom her kinsman, Spenser, dedicated his “Teares of the Muses”—the charming Amaryllis, whose praises he sang in “Colin Clout’s

Come Home Again"—Amaryllis, second only to Cynthia, the Queen herself.

One cannot but feel how keenly the young Milton would experience at Harefield the stimulus of the Elizabethan age and of the Spenserian influence. But Harefield, after all, is only an episode in the Horton period, a time fruitful and pregnant in Milton's life, and conterminous with a distinct and well-marked series of his poems. These bear the impress of his environment—not in the matter of mere description, however admirable—but rather by the eclogue-like character it has given to much that Milton wrote when he lived at Horton, and by the completeness of his absorption of the essentials of the beauty of rural England.

II. *At Chalfont St. Giles.*

Twenty-seven years after Milton left Horton in 1638 on his Italian journey, he came back to Buckinghamshire. Many eventful years in his life and in the history of his country had passed, yet those earlier and distant days—not so very distant after



MILTON'S COTTAGE, CHALFONT ST. GILES

all in memory—must have often been recalled as he saw again with his mind's eye the scenes once familiar to him. The months which Milton passed at Chalfont were not unfruitful, for here he completed "Paradise Lost," and here the plan of "Paradise Regained" was formulated. The life-work begun at Horton was finished at Chalfont St. Giles. It is doubtful whether Milton would have sought the village as a refuge from the plague which was decimating London, if he had not known it in earlier years, when he wandered from Horton among the upland villages. Though the faithful Ellwood, his friend and helper, obtained the "pretty box" for him, it was on Milton's own initiative. "Some little time before I went to Aylesbury Prison I was desired by my guardian, Master Milton, to take a house for him in the neighbourhood where I dwelt that he might go out of the city for the safety of himself and his family, the pestilence then growing hot in London. I took a pretty box for him in Giles Chalfont, a mile from me." Ellwood was then

tutor to the family of Isaac Pennington, the Quaker, at The Grange at Chalfont St. Peter, it should be remembered. Then he continues, "of which I gave him notice, and intended to have waited on him and seen him well settled in it, but was prevented by that imprisonment." Ellwood here refers to a series of imprisonments—wholly unjustifiable—which arose out of a tumult at Amersham in the course of a funeral of one of the Society of Friends. At that period, like many other Quakers, Ellwood passed not a little of his time in gaol, but this pitiful tale does not concern the story of Milton and Chalfont.

Anyone who chooses to walk through Chalfont St. Giles can see this cottage on the left-hand side of the road which runs up the hill towards Beaconsfield. In spite of his blindness the scene around the poet's temporary home would assuredly be familiar to him—the pleasant valley, with its little stream and gently sloping fields, the village nestled round the grey-towered church, the modest vine-covered cottage by the roadside—such a one—there are still

many in Buckinghamshire—as he had noted in his rambles when he lived at Horton, where the sunbeams struggled through a half-hidden window :—

Through the sweet briar and the vine,
Or the twisted eglantine.

It was towards the end of the summer of 1665, in July, that Milton came to Chalfont, and we can imagine him being led through the lanes, which extended into the woodland country between Chalfont and Penn, or walking along the London road southwards to see his friends at The Grange, northwards to visit those he knew at Amersham. The Vache was closed to him, for it was no longer owned by Fleetwoods, having been forfeited to the Crown and given to the Duke of York on the attainder of George Fleetwood in 1661, and purchased since then by one Sir Thomas Clayton, a staunch Royalist. The tints with which in autumn the woods and hedgerows of Buckinghamshire are aglow Milton could not see ; but we think of him sitting in his porch, warmed by the afternoon's sun, which till its setting would fall

upon his cottage, perhaps in quiet talk with Ellwood or Pennington, or one of the sojourners at The Grange. For the cottage has a pleasant sunny aspect, and in the window-seat, or in his garden he could sit, clad in the favourite coarse grey suit, and be read to or listen to music, until winter came, when, as at Horton—though most differently circumstanced—he could pass the long evenings by the fireside, for it was not till the early spring of 1660 that Milton returned to London. One can see from Ellwood's description how fully the poems then filled Milton's mind:—

“After some common discourses had passed between us, he called for a manuscript of his, which, being brought, he delivered to me, bidding me take it home with me, and read it at my leisure; and when I had so done, return it to him with my judgment thereupon. When I came home, and had set myself to read it, I found it was that excellent poem which he entitled ‘Paradise lost.’ After I had, with the best attention, read it through, I made him another visit,

and returned him his book, with due acknowledgment of the favour he had done me in communicating it to me. He asked me how I liked it and what I thought of it, which I modestly but freely told him, and, after some further discourse about it, I pleasantly said to him, 'Thou hast said much here of "Paradise Lost," but what hast thou to say of "Paradise Found?"' He made no answer, but sat some time in a muse; then broke off that discourse, and fell upon another subject. After the sickness was over, and the city well cleansed and become safely habitable again, he returned thither. And when afterwards I went to wait on him there which I seldom failed of doing whenever my occasions drew me to London, he showed me his second poem, called 'Paradise Regained,' and in a pleasant tone said to me, 'This is owing to you, for you put it into my head by the question you put to me at Chalfont, which before I had not thought of.'"¹

The connection not only between Milton

¹ "The History of Thomas Ellwood," written by himself. Ed. 1885, p. 199.

and Chalfont, but between Chalfont and the poems which were completed and begun there, as well as the continued existence of the cottage in which they were partly at least composed, and which we can still visit, has given this Buckinghamshire village a classical fame. It has become the goal of many pilgrimages, even though Horton, its church, and its low-lying meadows, are also inseparably associated with Milton, with his earlier work and years, from the actual influence of their rural charms which permeated his being. And there is this further word to be added—the Milton of Chalfont is a more clearly-defined person than the young Milton of Horton. The one is a man of mature years whose active life had ended, whose opinions were settled and whose life-work was nearing completion, about whom we are in no manner of doubt. The other figure is vague, uncertain, shadowy ; of him we have glimpses only, moving among the evening mists which rise from the dewy meadows of Horton and passing along the lonely hillsides of the Chiltern range.

CHAPTER V.

GRAY AND STOKE POGES.

THE "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" was begun by Gray¹ at Stoke Poges about 1745 or 1746. He altered it from time to time, but he did not complete it till June, 1750, and it was not published until the following year. It attracted great attention then and it has since continued to be perhaps the most popular poem in the English language. One cannot be surprised that one feels around the church of Stoke Poges a kind of poetic atmosphere, and that it has a reputation for beauty which, charming as the place is, has been a little exaggerated. Yet, allowing for the force of sentiment, it would be difficult to find in England a landscape to surpass in its union of natural beauty with

¹ See Appendix, Note C.

literary and historical associations that which is seen for the first few yards of the pathway leading from the road between Stoke Common and Slough to Stoke Church. To the antiquarian this ancient edifice with its gradation of architectural styles, from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, with its brasses and its monuments, is full of interest. But especially should one dwell on the fourteenth century wooden porch and on the South or Hastings Chapel built in the sixteenth century.

A sarcophagus on a great grey base, raised on a grassy mound on the left hand, on which are graven lines from some of Gray's most noted poems, at once attracts great attention by its surprising ugliness. Ugly as it is, one would not wish it away, because it helps to connect Stoke Poges with its literary and personal associations, with the family of William Penn, and those historical memories which belong to Jordans and the Chalfonts. The monument was placed in this field by John Penn of Stoke Park, the grandson of William Penn,

with the most praiseworthy intentions and with a real respect for the genius of the poet whom it unfitly commemorates. But the stranger soon loses his dislike of Wyatt's monument in the delightful scene across the meadow. The grey church of Stoke, with "ivy-mantled tower" and white wooden lantern standing out against the "rugged elms," and "the yew-tree shade," would alone suffice to make the landscape beautiful ; but a little to the right and the rear the mellow colouring of the old manor-house, with its graceful chimneys, marks the site of the home of Lord Keeper Hatton and Sir Edward Coke. On the other hand spread the grassy and wooded undulations of Stoke Park, the mansion shining white and large in the summer sunlight among the trees—not near enough for obtrusive details to be distasteful, but, as it is, adding to the variety and the suggestiveness of the scene.

It may be doubted whether, from the purely picturesque point of view, it would not be best to turn back and see no more, carrying this picture away in memory. The

church and graveyard are not in themselves more beautiful than many less fortunate places which are without a poet. Nothing can be uglier than the great oblong brick tomb outside the east end of the church, with flat stone covering, which marks the place where the remains of Gray are laid, together with those of the mother and the aunt who for so long made Stoke a country home for him. No words engraved on the tomb itself tell us that Gray is buried here, but his own memorial words to his mother, which we can yet trace out, suffice to recall alike his gentle pensive nature and his delicate and suggestive work :—

Beside her friend and sister
Here sleep the remains of
DOROTHY GRAY,
Widow,
The careful tender mother
Of many children, one of whom alone
Had the misfortune to survive her.
She died March 11, 1753,
Aged 72.

Under this stone Gray himself was buried eighteen years later. That this is his rest-

ing-place would alone give Stoke Church an enduring literary interest. But it is equally certain that some, at any rate, of the "Elegy" was written under the associations of and around the church. Assuredly the poem was completed here; and it expresses in matured form the thoughts which often passed through Gray's mind as he strolled about these shady meadows and listened on summer evenings to the sounds of country life. For years he had wandered about the lanes around Stoke and Burnham. He stayed in his youthful days at Burnham with his uncle by marriage, Mr. Rogers, reading when he should have been hunting, sitting under the beeches of Burnham with his Horace in his hand. As he grew older the church must have been almost daily in his sight when he stayed at Stoke. It was the centre of a charming scene, reached by a pathway from the village where his mother's house¹ stood on the edge of the

¹ West End Cottage, now part of Stoke Court. Gray's uncle Rogers lived here, and later, 1742-1752, Gray often resided here with his mother and aunt at the very end of her life.

still heath-clad and breezy common, hard by the old manor-house, which would recall the lot of Coke in his later days, and with him the men of his age, so many of whose paths led prematurely to the grave. There would here be that association of quiet natural beauty and historical memories so certain to have a continuous charm for one who was at once a lover of Nature and a cultured student.

As the church disappoints us a little, so do the remains of the old manor-house, which was built in 1555 by Henry, Earl of Huntingdon. It is now but a fragment of the original building, which was pulled down in 1789. Shadowy figures, Lord Keepers, and the statesmen of Elizabeth's reign, and the great Queen herself, reappear in imagination when we stand by the old walls.

Full oft within the spacious walls,
When he had fifty winters o'er him,
My grave Lord Keeper led the brawls ;
The seals and maces danced before him.

Thus Gray touches on the times of Sir Christopher Hatton. But the house has yet a more lasting historical and also a legal

interest; for it was here that Coke completed his "Institutes"—"where in my old age I live," as he tells us in his dignified preface. In these days we are accustomed to see law-books, for the most part, written by young men with often inadequate knowledge, of imperfect abilities, and without experience; so that our legal literature has become the most formless and crude mass of writing in our language. Coke advanced to his task in an altogether different spirit. He had, as he says of Littleton, a "profound knowledge of the fundamental laws of the realm." He regarded this book as the end of his life's work and as a perpetual monument to him as a lawyer. He was not mistaken. Wholly different in character and career as Coke was from Gray, yet each has left monuments in the literature of England which show no sign of decay. From the personal point of view the most pleasing picture of Coke is of the rough old lawyer among these quiet scenes, in the last years of his life, preparing his great legal work. It softens our more common view of

him as a rude and brutal advocate, a lover of legal technicalities. We cannot easily forget the harshness with which he prosecuted Raleigh, and his relentlessness to the Jesuit Garnett. But he must be forgiven for much by reason of his sturdy and sensible defence of the constitutional rights of the people, of his resistance to the demand for benevolences, of upholding judicial independence, and of proposing the Petition of Right. All these antagonistic features we can regard quietly as we think of him at work in the old manor-house.

Nor should we forget Gray's connection with the manor-house. Lady Cobham, the heiress of Edward Halsey, who had purchased the place in 1720, was living there in 1751. There, too, were her niece, Miss Speed, and her friend, Lady Schaub. Persuaded by their hostess, the two ladies determined, pleading a common friend, to make the retiring poet's acquaintance, and so one day they walked across the fields—we can do the same now—to West End House, and made a call upon him :—

A brace of warriors not in buff,
But rustling in their silks and tissues.

Gray was far from being an unsociable man, and could not but be happier for the friendship of these sprightly ladies, for whose amusement he wrote the *jeu d'esprit* which he called "The Long Story," "the verses . . . were wrote to divert that particular Family and succeeded accordingly. But being shew'd about Town, are not liked there at all."¹

Few will leave Stoke without strolling through the meadows by the path so often trodden by Gray when he was on one of his long visits to his mother. Stoke Poges is a straggling disjointed sort of place. West End Stoke, whither we are now bent, is a small modern-looking bit of village, of assuredly little beauty : not at all the hamlet we have pictured, even though the cottage-gardens are bright with flowers, and purple clematis and gay nasturtiums make pleasant walls and windows. When we reach it, we shall perceive on our left, and almost hidden

¹ Letter to Wharton, December 18, 1751.

from view, a large house which encloses within it what was once Gray's home, during his absence from London or Cambridge, for so long, and for so much of every year.

Some may care to retrace their steps to the west end of the park, to pass before what Lord Campbell has called, in his *Life of Lord Rosslyn*, "the ugly villa" of Baylis. It is a sensible country house, and it is neither ugly nor in the least what we call a villa. Its description as such is but one of Lord Campbell's now well-known ill-natured inaccuracies. A walk past the place reminds us of another generation of lawyers and of statesmen, in addition to those whom the old manor-house recalls, and thus adds yet another to the singular attractions of Stoke Poges. There are, indeed, other places than the breezy common and the elm-studded meadows, which may tell us of Gray and of Coke, such as the quadrangles of Cambridge and the great hall at Westminster. But in these places they are figures in a crowd of memorable Englishmen. At Stoke the spirit of Gray is eminently the *genius loci* ;

The Curfew tolls the Knell of parting Day,
 The lowing Herd wind slowly o'er the Lea,
 The Plowman homeward plods his weary Way,
 And leaves the World to Darkness & to me.

Now fades the glimmering Landscape on the Sight
 And all the e'er a solemn stillness holds,
 Save where the Beetle wheels his droning Flight,
 Or drowsy Inkleings lull the distant Echo.

Save that from yonder wy-mantled Tower
 The moping Owl does to the Moon complain
 Of such a wand'ring near her secret Tower
 Molest her ancient solitary Reign.

Beneath those rugged Elms, that Yew-tree's shade,
 Where heaves the turf in many a mould'ring heap;
 Each in his narrow Cell for ever laid
 The rude Forefathers of the Hamlet sleep.
 The breezy Call of incense-breathing Morn,
 The Swallow twittering from the straw-built Nest,
 The Cock's shrill Clamour, & the echoing Horn,
 No more shall rouse them from their only Bed.

Facsimile of the first stanzas of the "Elegy written in a Country Churchyard".

From the MS. at Pembroke College, Cambridge.

yet even though this be so, and though the character of Coke harmonizes so little with the feeling of the place, the manor-house among the trees remains, as it were, a memorial of him. The very Elegy, too, which has made the fame of the place, always recalls him to mind, since he sought

Th' applause of listening senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,

as it does Gray himself ; for assuredly he, if any man, was one of those of whom it may be said,

Along the cool sequestered vale of life
They kept the noiseless tenor of their way.

CHAPTER VI.

BEACONSFIELD. THE HOME OF BURKE AND WALLER.

IT would be difficult to find in history two men who differed more in character than Burke¹ and Waller.² The former, as we all know, was high-minded and courageous, with a lofty ideal of political morality and with well-matured political opinions. The latter was essentially a man of the world, with no strong political convictions, and not very eager to stand by such as he had. He was timid in character and a time-server, but he ought not to be judged by too strict a standard ; for he lived in a time of difficulty for men of moderate views and pliable character. One should bear in mind, too, that, before the Long Parliament took the bit between its teeth, Waller made a temperate and an open protest against its

¹ See Appendix, Note D. ² See Appendix, Note E.

ecclesiastical intolerance. His subsequent acquiescence in the Protectorate was a certain consequence of the tendency of a moderate-minded and easygoing man to make the best of existing political conditions. His intimacy with Cromwell was natural: he was a relative; and Waller was too clever not to appreciate the capacity of the Protector, and to cultivate his personal relationship with him. With these striking dissimilarities in the character and the conduct of these two men, there exists the broad likeness that both were politicians and men of letters, and both men of prominence in the public affairs of their time. It would be ridiculous to compare a statesman and a political philosopher like Burke with an intriguing politician and a graceful and superficial poet like Waller. In the minds of many of us, however, they will always be inseparably coupled, in spite of considerable differences and of the gulf of long years which separates them. For they rest near together in the quiet Buckinghamshire town of Beaconsfield.

It requires little imagination to picture Beaconsfield as it was in the time of Burke. The houses are nearly the same ; an air of intense quietness still pervades the place. A broad street of low white houses is intersected in the middle by two shorter ways. This point is the centre of the village. The grey church, with a row of dark-foliaged elms in the roadway near a slip of pleasant green turf, the picturesque medieval Rectory House¹ close by, and an old-fashioned inn or two, make up the simple picture. There is no bustle. Here a labourer lounges from his work, and there a woman quietly goes on her errand to the post. Mentally one goes back easily to the eighteenth century. We almost expect to see one of Miss Austen's heroines walk out in poke-bonnet and short-waisted dress ; nor should we be surprised to see Mr. Bennett standing on a doorstep, contemptuously watching his family depart to pay a morning call on Mr. Bingley.

¹ Begun about 1500, and completed 1543. It was for a time a sub-priory of the Benedictine priory at Burnham.

But coaches no longer rattle through the place with passengers for Oxford and the West, and the guards and drivers and stablemen who bustled about the Saracen's Head and the Royal White Hart are replaced by chauffeurs.

A few steps down the street towards Hedgerley, and we come to the grey square-towered church. One who passes along this road notices at once a great walnut-tree on the south-east side of the churchyard, not many yards from the street, which overhangs an unsightly tomb enclosed by high iron railings. It is a square erection, with the conventional urn at each corner ; an elaborate piece of carving in the form of drapery covers the top, and, as though to keep it secure, a stone pyramid rests upon it. This is the tomb of Edmund Waller : " *Edmundi Waller hic jacet id quantum mortis cessit* " ; and so on through many words of Latin on each of the four sides of the stone. This epitaph was from the pen of Rymer, and he tells us how Waller was a poet and a statesman, and when he was

born and when he died, and much else—all in a very laudatory style, though the description of him as a poet who “*lauream quam meruit adolescens, octogenarius non abdicavit*,” happily describes a characteristic of the poet who praised Royalty at eighteen and his God at eighty with equal facility of verse.¹ The stately tree above the grave makes this unsightly tomb more commonplace than it would otherwise seem, and the conventional description more uninteresting than such descriptions usually are. So one soon turns away to seek in the church the memorial to Burke. On the south wall a small oval tablet of marble records his grave, as well as that of his son and of his brother :—

Near this place

Lies interred

All that was mortal of the

Rt. Honourable EDMUND BURKE,

Who died 9th July, 1797.

It is more telling in its plain simplicity

¹ See “Of the Danger his Majesty [being Prince] Escaped in the Road at St. Andero,” written in 1623 on the occasion of an accident to Prince Charles, and the “Divine Poems,” written in the last years of Waller’s life.

than the tomb of Waller "with shapeless sculpture decked" and unimpressive words.¹ As we walk down the road to Penn, and note the distant woodlands and the high tableland on which, among pleasant little valleys, Beaconsfield stands, we cannot be surprised at the love that Burke had for his home. The site of the house—Gregories² or Butler's Court—which stood on the left-hand side of the road from Beaconsfield to the railway station is now covered by villas. The house was in Burke's time a rather pretentious mansion, consisting of a central part with a conspicuous pediment, and two wings connected by an open arcade of pillars ; on each side of them were two large

¹ A modern monument, which is unworthy of Burke's fame, has also been placed on the south wall of the church.

² After he purchased the "pretty house and estate" in 1768, Burke enlarged the house, and called it Butler's Court. Characteristically, though he did not want it, he purchased the seller's (Mr. Waller's) collection of paintings and marbles, which added to the expense of the purchase. See Letter to James Barry, R.A., July 19, 1768, "Barry's Works," vol. i., p. 135.



Elevation of the Principal Front of Butler's Court Bucks

BUTLER'S COURT, BEACONSFIELD

doors for the passage of carriages. This long elevation faced to the south, and in front, bounded by a ha-ha, was a lawn and meadow, by the side of which was a grove or shrubbery, in which two fine cedars were prominent. In the near distance to the north, under the branches of several elm-trees, could be seen the home-farm.

In his monograph on Burke, Lord Morley has truly said that it is at his country home we like best to think of Burke. "It is still," he writes, "a touching picture to the historic imagination to follow him from the heat and violence of the House, where tipsy squires derided the greatest genius of his time, down to the calm shades of Beaconsfield, where he would with his own hands give food to a starving beggar, or medicine to a peasant sick of the ague; where he would talk of the weather, the turnips, and the hay, with the team-men and the farm-bailiff; and where in the evening stillness he would pace the walk under the trees and reflect on the state of Europe and the distractions of his country." But Bea-

consfield was far more than the mere quiet retreat or the peaceful working-place of a literary man. There was to be found a large and busy household and active rural work ; there many of the first men of the day met in friendly talk or in political council. The place indeed is inseparably connected with the chief politicians and writers of the age of Burke. It was to Beaconsfield that Fox went after his hasty return from Italy in 1788, when the political world was agitated by the probable retirement of Pitt and the formation of a Whig ministry. Johnson stood at the hall-door of Butler's Court to bid Burke farewell when the dissolution of 1774 was made known, and Burke set out on the campaign which resulted in the famous election for Bristol. Garrick used to stroll with Burke about the garden ; here Fox would commune with him, and here Reynolds rested from his work.

At Butler's Court, too, the youthful Crabbe, rescued by Burke from the open prison-door and from want, spent the summer of 1781. Here he thought over his

poems, and received the kindly criticisms of the statesman, and what was perhaps then more important—his generous aid and assistance. No occurrence in Burke's life is more admirable than the sympathetic way in which he responded to Crabbe's cry for help in the spring of 1781, gave him a home at Beaconsfield, and secured his future.

From the point of view of a prudent man, the purchase of Gregories was probably a mistake. The cost of the estate was £22,000, of which £14,000 was left on mortgage, and was unpaid at Burke's death. Of the remaining £8,000, £2,000 was Burke's own money, and £6,000 a loan from the Marquis of Rockingham, a debt which he cancelled on his death-bed, with other notes of hand, to the amount of £30,000.¹ But the consideration of money matters in any shape did not much disturb Burke, or lessen the happiness of his life at Beaconsfield.

Yet the cost of the upkeep of the house and its service not only absorbed the profits from the farm, but caused an annual deficit

¹ Morley's "Burke," p. 35.

in his domestic budget, and a constant pressure from impatient creditors.¹

On the whole, the impression which the memorials—somewhat slight—of Burke's life at Beaconsfield leave on the mind is of a considerable country home, rather Irish in its want of system and order, where the family lived, according to Mrs. Thrale, "among dirt, cobwebs, pictures, and statues," and where a negro servant "carried tea about with a cut finger wrapped in rags."² Beaconsfield was no doubt very different from Streat-ham and was characterized by an easy hospitality, and an unostentatious and a

¹ Mr. A. Charsley, of Beaconsfield, tells the following story, related by his grandfather, who was in Burke's time a solicitor. This gentleman was instructed by a client to serve a writ on Burke. It was given to a clerk to whom Burke was unknown. As the clerk approached the house, he asked a man ploughing in an adjoining field if he knew whether Mr. Burke was at home. "Mr. Burke is out," was the reply of the ploughman, and the clerk returned. The man at the plough was Burke, enjoying himself in agricultural work.

² Mrs. Piozzi's "Thraliana," ed. by C. Hughes, London, 1913, p. 33.

too generous charity. The atmosphere was at once intellectual and liberal, political and literary. Able men and women were constantly gathered under Burke's roof, not from his desire to collect remarkable people as so many curiosities, but because like was attracted by like, literature, politics, and the fine arts were discussed at Beaconsfield, not to impress the cleverness of the speaker on his listeners, but because in themselves the subjects were of first-rate interest to the whole circle. Good sense and knowledge, acuteness and taste, were always evident at Burke's parties, and in the master an abounding energy of mind, which overflowed from politics and literature into his work and his agricultural projects on his six-hundred-acre farm.

The form of Burke is so much greater than that of Waller, that one has little inclination to walk through the park at Hall Barns (the gates of which are close to Beaconsfield) and see the site of Waller's home. It was a fine house in the days of Charles I. ; there is a fine house, built in

1712, now. It was what was called a county mansion then ; it is the same now. The family of Waller owned Hall Barns long before Edmund Waller came into the world ; he lived there from time to time throughout his life, but it is chiefly associated with him after his return in 1652 from his nine years' banishment. Until the Restoration he lived there continuously, visited sometimes by Cromwell, but keeping himself aloof from political life. Waller died a century before Burke, but years after Gregories was burnt and in ruins Hall Barns was still owned by Wallers. Burke on the other hand dropped by accident into this fair English county. He bought Gregories in 1768. Here for nearly thirty years he mused and wrote, rested and entertained his friends, watched the political movements of the world, and experimentalized on his corn and cattle. Here he died. The property was sold in 1812¹ and Beaconsfield knew no more the name of Burke.

¹ Butler's Court was destroyed by fire in 1813.

CHAPTER VII.

BURKE AND WENDOVER.

IN a small map of Wendover dated 1620, the town is depicted with one main street. At the eastern extremity of this thoroughfare another leads northwards into the vale of Aylesbury, whilst at the other end a third street connects Wendover with the road to London. This sketch in its general outlines scarcely differs from that which is printed in the Report on South Buckinghamshire of the Historical Monuments Commission issued in 1912. At a yet earlier period, between 1533 and 1542, Leland described Wendover as "a pretty throughfayre towne, having two streets well-built with timber," and he graphically added that it was a "townlette" standing "on the roots of the hills." The

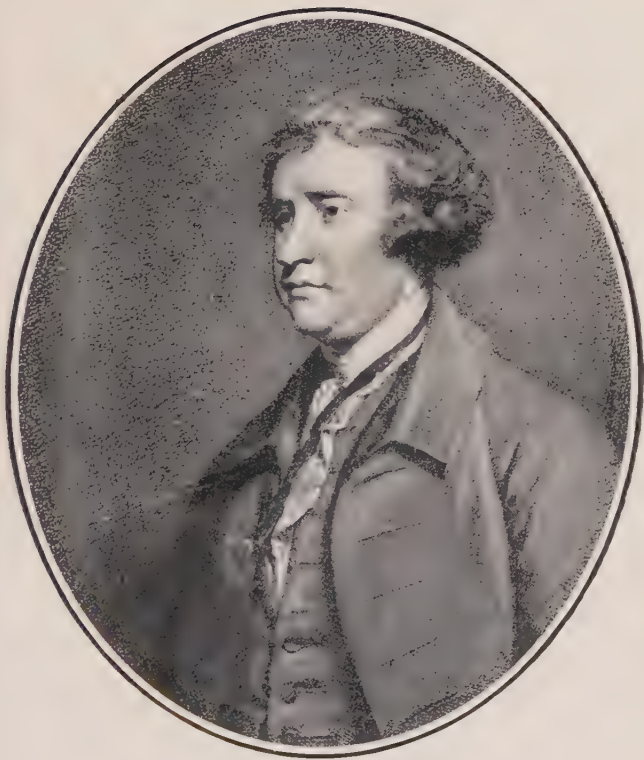
description is very accurate, for Wendover is a community wholly neither of the hills nor of the vale, somewhat solitary, in a slight hollow at the base of bare grassy slopes. In appearance, with some small and unimportant changes of structural details, the little town remains to-day as it was centuries ago, "well-built with timber," the houses mostly of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, with some of earlier and later date—an interesting example of a small and extinct parliamentary borough, which, at one time represented by an influential man of the locality, degenerated in the eighteenth century into the pocket borough of a nobleman.

Among the local notabilities who, in early times, represented Wendover in Parliament, John Hampden is pre-eminent. He was elected in 1623, and he remained a member for it until 1640 when he was elected for the county. Long after that time various Hampdens figure, session after session, as parliamentary representatives of the little borough. It is, however, the election of Burke in December, 1765, which gives

Wendover its chief personal interest. It was in all respects a most momentous event, productive of immediate consequences vitally affecting not only Burke's political career but the whole course of his life. It brought him into the House of Commons at a crucial moment for himself and for his country. Entirely through his writings and by the impression which he made on those who knew him, Burke had already obtained a public reputation for unusual ability. Four years previously Horace Walpole, a critical observer, had written to George Montagu that he had met at dinner "Gar-ric, and a young Mr. Burk, who wrote a book in the style of Lord Bolingbroke, that was much admired. He is a sensible man but has not worn off his authorism yet." Wendover offered Burke the opportunity of a start in parliamentary life at the moment when his outside reputation as an author was sufficient to give him a preliminary footing at Westminster, and, though he had ties which bound him to Rockingham personally, he was enabled to enter the House, not as the hack of any group of parliament-

ary leaders, but as an independent political thinker and writer.

At the time of Burke's first election for Wendover, George Grenville's Stamp Act had raised constitutional questions which Burke was eminently fitted to illuminate in speech. He soon seized an opportunity to impress the House of Commons. On January 27, 1766, a petition was presented to Parliament from some of the North American provinces against the Stamp Act, its reception was opposed, and an important debate followed. Burke intervened in the discussion with noticeable effect. "There appeared in the debate a new speaker, whose fame rose high above the ordinary pitch. His name was Edmund Burke." Walpole, for he is the writer, in his *Memoirs of the reign of George the Third*, proceeds to sketch the well-known portrait of Burke as a parliamentarian. In the great debates in the same year on the resolution as to the power of Parliament to bind the people and Colonies of America, and on the motion for the repeal of the Stamp Act, Burke threw



EDMUND BURKE

his weight on to the side of the Government. With the propriety of his political action we are not now concerned—his proceedings in parliament at this time on a subject of vital national importance is described in order to show the exceeding importance of the first election for Wendover. Elected in 1765, he had by the end of the following year gained a high place in the House of Commons. Johnson's testimony on the point is conclusive: "he has gained more reputation than perhaps any man at his first appearance ever gained before. He made two speeches in the House for repealing the Stamp Act, which were publicly commended by Mr. Pitt and have filled the town with wonder." One may say that an opportunity to enter parliament would not have failed sooner or later to arrive. But in considering a career we have to take facts as they are, and the more the early parliamentary triumphs of Burke are recognized the more important does his connection with Wendover appear.

Though secretary to the Marquis of

Rockingham, Burke did not—as has sometimes been suggested—owe his election to him or to his influence. The members for Wendover were nominated by Earl Verney, an Irish peer, who was also a magnate of Buckinghamshire, and whose home at Claydon might be dimly discerned from the heights above Wendover among the fertile fields of the Vale of Aylesbury. He was member for the county and possessed property also near Wendover. Though a Whig in principle, Lord Verney was lightly bound by party ties, and with the action of his parliamentary nominees he did not, as Burke acknowledged at a later time, interfere. With Lord Verney, Burke's kinsman, William Burke had had some business relations, and it was he who arranged for Edmund Burke's candidature for Wendover. The details of the agreement with Lord Verney are obscure, but, writing to Lord Rockingham in 1774, Burke refers to William: "to whom I primarily owe my being a member of parliament, and who has for me sacrificed everything, and by his encouragement and example always made me act with proper resolution."

Wendover did more than affect the career of Burke as a statesman, it changed the whole course of his home life. Without Wendover there would have been no Beaconsfield, which loomed so largely in after years in his own life and in the lives of some of his circle—of Garrick, Reynolds, and Crabbe. It brought the struggling young Irish publicist into close touch with a typical agricultural and English county, just as in the succeeding century the retreat of Isaac Disraeli from Bloomsbury to Bradenham produced an even stranger union—between his son and the people of Buckinghamshire.

But this more intimate local association and its several results, did not occur till after the election of 1768, when Burke was again returned, which caused him—a man of letters living in London hitherto attached mainly by slender political ties to a small rural community—to take root in the county, to enter closely into its political affairs, and to become the possessor of a delightful home. Gregories, in spite of the financial embarrassment which it produced in his affairs, Burke

enjoyed to his last hour. Here he could entertain politicians and men of letters, and was able to engross himself in agricultural work. Springing from his connection with Wendover, new and quite different pursuits were added to Burke's life : " Again elected for the same interest, I have made a push, with all I could collect of my own, and the aid of my friends, to cast a little root in this country. I have purchased a house, with an estate of about 600 acres of land, in Buckinghamshire, twenty-four miles from London, where I now am. It is a place exceedingly pleasant ; and I purpose (God willing) to become a farmer in good earnest."

Burke, thus comfortably accommodated, remained member for Wendover till the General Election of September, 1774, when he was obliged, by reason of Earl Verney's financial embarrassment, to relinquish his seat : " The state of Lord Verney's affairs, both parliamentary and private, make it necessary for me either to quit public life, or find some other avenue to parliament than his interest. His private circumstances are very indifferent. . . . He will, indeed

he must, have those to stand for Wendover (now his only borough of three in which he had formerly an interest) who can bear the charge which that borough is to him."

On October 5, his brother Richard, on Burke's behalf, addressed a letter of farewell to his constituency, "returning his best, his warmest and his most sincere thanks to the worthy inhabitants of Wendover for the great honour and trust which they twice reposed in him." The writer must have smiled when he wrote these lines, for no one knew better than he that the worthy inhabitants of Wendover were notoriously corrupt, and that the return of more than one candidate had been voided for bribery. Had Lord Verney been still able to fill the pockets of the electors, Burke would certainly have continued to receive their trust.

It chanced that at this time Johnson, Mrs. Thrale, and her husband were on their way home from a tour in Wales. They stayed, as they neared London, at Burke's hospitable home, and Mrs. Thrale has in a lively diary, which has only lately been published, left us a sketch of the last days of

Burke as member for Wendover, and of him in the rather unfamiliar rôle of a local electioneer—not of a parliamentary orator or of a political philosopher. The entry is of the 29th of September, and on that day Mrs. Thrale wrote: "To-day Mr. Burke was obliged to go out somewhere about election matters. There was an old Mr. Lowndes dined with us, and got very drunk talking politics with Will Burke and my master after dinner. Lord Verney and Edmund came home at night much flustered with liquor, and I thought how I had spent three months from home among dunces of all ranks and sorts, but had never seen a man drunk till I came among the wits."¹ Lord Verney's parliamentary influence in Buckinghamshire was at this moment threatened by the Grenvilles, and he and Burke were troubled not only about Wendover, but about the more important county constituency. Burke and Lord Verney had probably spent a long day passing over rough roads to Aylesbury and Wendover, talking

¹ "Dr. Johnson and Mrs. Thrale." By A. M. Broadley, 1910, p. 217.

and drinking with their supporters. It was no doubt the last visit which the statesman paid to his little constituency as well as the last occasion on which he took an active share in the politics of the county in which he had come to live. A few days later he left for Yorkshire, and on October 11th he was, through the influence of Rockingham, elected member for Malton. On the same day he heard that he had been nominated for Bristol. But it was as the representative of Wendover that Burke attained the parliamentary position which made the Whig leader anxious to find a seat for him, and the Liberals of Bristol wishful to secure him as their member. And so Burke passes out of the political story of this Chiltern "town-lette," which, more than twenty years later, in 1796, was to return to parliament another famous man—George Canning. But with his connection with Buckinghamshire we are not now concerned, and we take leave of Burke and Wendover and of this episode in his life in a characteristic eighteenth century atmosphere of politics and ale.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAMPDEN'S HOME.

It was perhaps fortunate for Hampden's¹ fame that he received a mortal wound on Chalgrove Field. Patriotic and statesman-like though he was, there is no saying to what extremities he might have been driven by the course of events, or what errors of judgment might not one day have tarnished the noble career which ended on that June morning. As it is, Hampden lives in history not only as an admirable statesman and soldier, but as an ideal country gentleman. It was as a Buckinghamshire gentleman that he was forced into public affairs, and the whole of his career is closely associated with his own county. A large part of his life was passed in the ordinary occupations of a country

¹ See Appendix, Note F.



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JOHN HAMPDEN

gentleman—in managing his estates, doing justice among his neighbours, and in sport among the dense woodlands which then covered, as to some extent they still do, the southern slopes of the Chiltern Hills. It was as a freeholder of the parish of Stoke Mandeville that, on a day in January, 1637, when minded to pay his assessment at Great Kimble Church, he refused payment of the amount of ship-money levied on him. In 1623 he had been elected member for Wendover, a little borough hardly more than a village, which in later years was represented—as is described in a previous page—by Burke. During the existence of the Long Parliament, when member for Buckinghamshire, he must have constantly passed to and fro over the thirty miles of road which separate Hampden—Great Hampden¹ to give it its proper name—

¹ Little Hampden, which lies in a hollow on the opposite side of the valley to Great Hampden a mile to the north of the road from Great Missenden, consists of a small church and a few houses. It is of interest because it retains the old world air of the locality.

from London. When he became an officer of the Parliamentary army, his operations were chiefly confined to Buckinghamshire and the low-lying lands which stretch from the northern edges of the Chilterns towards Thame and Oxford.

These local characteristics of Hampden's life are made more vivid by a visit to what was once his home—so little change has nearly three centuries produced. In the seventeenth century Hampden, on the sides of one of the numerous valleys which descend from the Chiltern range, was, comparatively speaking, near London. A good road ran by way of Missenden, Amersham, and Uxbridge to the city.

Railway promoters for long left this portion of Buckinghamshire untouched, and we still find it little different from what it was in Hampden's time. Great Missenden, "a preaty thoroughfare, but no market-toun," remains a quiet village, well answering to

The remarkable mural paintings in the church are well preserved and vividly exemplify the former internal appearance of the churches of South Buckinghamshire.

Leland's description of it. The valleys and the hillsides are still clothed with beech-woods, and here and there a farmstead attracts the eye. If Hampden's house is approached from this village—by far the better way of nearing it—it is seen through a vista of trees in no long time after passing from the main valley. An avenue is entered from the road, very broad, with trees of many kinds—birches and beeches, Spanish chestnuts and limes—and with an ancient greensward and breast-high bracken. At the end of it the low white walls of Hampden House, the tiled roof just peeping above the battlements, stand up with singular effect. As the house is approached along the upward slope, a cross-road cuts the avenue just at the bounds of the park. Within a stone's throw of the house, which looks down on the descending avenue, is the church built in the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, simple in architectural features, with a low tower and a humble porch. It is well to take the pathway which leads through the park from the wicket by the south porch to the fields beyond, and to look back upon the picture

from the edge of the grass. The gentle upward slope by which the track has led permits one to see grouped together the church, with its shading trees, the low southern front of the house, gardens, and out-houses, lawns and shrub-lined walks—focussed in one view we see—now as in the past—Hampden's home.

Though the external aspect of the house has been altered since the seventeenth century—it was much rebuilt and enlarged in the eighteenth century—the general character and spirit of the place, so seemingly remote, is little changed. Within the church, on the south wall of the chancel, Hampden, “in perpetuall testimony of his conjugal love,” placed on record his affection for his wife, “the love and glory of a well-ordered family.” Close to her tomb Hampden was buried, but without a commemorating word, though a pious grandson in the eighteenth century placed a monument to his memory in the chancel. In 1828 his biographer, Lord Nugent, examined various coffins in order to identify Hampden's remains by means of the description of his wound ; such

an investigation could produce no certain conclusion. It is enough for us to know that this church is Hampden's last resting-place, as the house hard by was his life-long home, and that every glade had been trodden by him.

For centuries before John Hampden became the owner of this estate his ancestors had had it in possession. There was a Baldwin de Hampden in the reign of Henry I.; Griffith Hampden, High Sheriff of Bucks, entertained Queen Elizabeth here. The Hampdens were a strong and capable race. John Hampden's son Richard was a member of Parliament and Treasurer of the Navy. But with the death of his half-brother John, in 1754, the race ended. Hampden then passed into the family of Trevors, who became Viscounts Hampden; but with the death of the third Viscount in 1824, the estate passed to the Hobarts, Earls of Buckinghamshire.

It is an easy walk to descend past the house into the Risborough road, which gradually rises through beech-woods and copses. In a couple of miles it attains the neck of

the valley, whence a grassy slope on the right leads to the edge of the Chilterns, which here descend abruptly to the famous Vale of Aylesbury. On either hand the headlands of the hills protrude into the plain. Right below is the tower of Great Kimble Church ; beyond, among the spreading expanse of fields and scattered villages and "dim discovered spires" is seen the smoke of Aylesbury, among its ancient pastures and glorious hunting-grounds. To the west, on the Oxford border, one might see Chalgrove Field if it could at such a distance be identified, and Hampden's monument, nearer the little town of Thame. Along some road from it to the Chilterns, Hampden's body was brought for burial to his home. All around the swelling hills form shelters for cosy farms ; and the dense woods clothe them with thick and many-shaded verdure, both crest and foot. Every inch of this ground, both near and far, was familiar to Hampden, so that it is not enough to see Hampden House and Church. The chalky Chilterns, the outstretching vale, the farmsteads and the hamlets, the broad woodlands,

Isabel Hauke of the parish of St. Peter was
 buried the 10th day of April: 1642/
 Anne Westoe widow was buried the
 1st of May: 1642

1642 Robert Lonsdale Rector Nov. 30 1642
 John Hampden Esquire Lord of Hampden Buried June 25th
 Robert Lane buried y^e 4th of November;
 Henry Fenison of Stoke p^{er} y^e 5th of November;
 Anne Fellow & wife of Willid Fellow y^e 4th of Jan.
 Elizabeth Briston a young mayde Jan^y 4th 1644
 An^y 5th Willd. Lovett Jan^y 25th
 Willid Fenno of Willid Fellow, a young Mayd & C^{xt}

1644

The wife of Robert Toler was buried Apr^{il} 30th
 The wife of Robert Toler was buried Apr^{il} 30th
 The wife of Robert Toler was buried Apr^{il} 30th
 The wife of Robert Toler was buried Apr^{il} 30th
 The wife of Robert Toler was buried Apr^{il} 30th

FACSIMILE OF THE ENTRY OF JOHN HAMPDEN'S BURIAL IN THE
 PARISH REGISTERS OF GREAT HAMPDEN.

are all needed to complete the picture of Hampden's home.¹

¹ The following extract from "Lord Nugent's Memorials of Hampden," p. 125, third edition, is of interest :—

"His mansion still remains. It stands away from both the principal roads which pass through Buckinghamshire, at the back of that chalky range of the Chilterns which bounds on one side the Vale of Aylesbury. The scenery which immediately surrounds it—from its seclusion little known—is of singular beauty ; opening upon a ridge which commands a very extensive view over several counties, and diversified by dells clothed with a natural growth of box, juniper, and beech. What has once been the abode of such a man can never but be interesting, from the associations which belong to it. But, even forgetting these, no one surely who has the heart or taste for the charm of high breezy hills, and green glades enclosed within the shadowy stillness of ancient woods, and avenues leading to a house in whose walls the remains of the different styles of architecture from the Early Norman to the Tudor are still partly traced through the deforming innovations of the eighteenth century—no one surely can visit the residence of Hampden, and not do justice to the love which its master bore it, and to that stronger feeling which could lead him from such a retirement to the toils and perils to which thenceforth he entirely devoted himself ! "

CHAPTER IX.

BULSTRODE AND THE PORTLANDS.

BETWEEN the fresh and heathy expanses of Stoke and Gerrard's Cross commons, the ground suddenly dips down into one of those small valleys so characteristic of South Buckinghamshire. It is crossed by the main road from Slough midway between these two places; and if the cross-road which here branches away towards Hedgerley along the bottom be followed for half a mile, one of the gates of Bulstrode will be seen. It will not take long to reach the top of the hill on which stands the house, which forms almost the centre of the park. The little valley we have just left winds round this gentle hill, and from this point the eye is struck by the broken line of wooded uplands which seems almost on all sides to

encircle Bulstrode. Gentle undulations, woods fading off in the distance, a picturesque red pile of irregular buildings, make up an attractive piece of landscape.

The interest of Bulstrode is altogether of the past, and that interest is political and aristocratic. It takes us back to two periods—to the age of William III., and to the eighteenth century. With a little effort we can picture for ourselves some personal aspects of those particular times.

The house we now see was built by the twelfth Duke of Somerset in 1862. It is, in fact, the fourth mansion that has stood on this spot. Originally belonging to the family of Bulstrode, this estate afterwards became the property of Judge Jeffreys, from whose son-in-law it was purchased by the first Earl of Portland.¹ No places could be more different than the monotonous flats of Holland, to which Bentinck had for the larger part of his life been accustomed, and the wooded and irregular uplands of

¹ See Appendix, Note G.

Buckinghamshire. But it was Bulstrode which he made his home after his labours as soldier and statesman seemed to have come to an end. From the time of his retirement from Court to his death in 1709 it was indeed his principal abode. But it was not alone the attractions of house and garden that fixed Lord Portland here at Bulstrode. It was a delightful retreat for a once strenuous statesman ; it was sufficiently near London to enable him to attend the King when he desired, and remote enough to permit him to enjoy that quiet which was more to his taste than the gaiety of a Court. Bentinck was essentially a man of business, and when the more courtierlike Arnold Van Kepple, who had been created Earl of Albemarle, began to gain the confidence of William, Bentinck, with something of the unreasoning jealousy of a faithful dog, threw up—in 1698—his several posts at Court. But, as history has told, he by no means gave up all the work of a statesman—then occurred, for instance, his memorable embassy to France—but he could not be

always employed, and it was at Bulstrode that he rested when he was at leisure.

After William's death in 1703 Portland was more frequently at Bulstrode. The friendship between the King and himself has much of romance—both men were strong, clear-sighted, and each had for the other something of the tender affection of a woman. It was natural, therefore, that thenceforth Portland should take no active part in public affairs. Throughout his life he had been a statesman not only from public spirit or personal ambition but from a desire to serve his friend and master. When William died much of the motive power of Bentinck's activity was gone. He was content to become a spectator of the political scene, and to spend his days sometimes in Holland, more often in his Buckinghamshire home.

The proximity of this part of Buckinghamshire to London made it a favourite district with the statesmen of the eighteenth century. At the end of it, and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bulstrode

and Beaconsfield were centres of important doings. The former house in the eighteenth century was of a splendour sufficient to strike a man of the world like Horace Walpole, who often went to Bulstrode from his sister's place¹ at Chalfont St. Peter, or "Chaffont," as he writes it. But Walpole did not care for the house as a whole. He called it "Dutch and triste," but the "brave gallery of pictures"² pleased him when he was not in too critical a mood or gouty; then he would cynically remark that the Portlands had "so many pounds of ancestors in the lump." Mrs. Montagu was more generous in her praise, for she writes in 1741 that "Bulstrode is the most charming place I ever saw—a very magnificent house, fine garden, and beautiful park." Such the place appeared to the vivacious lady to whom a neighbouring squire was "as heavy

¹ Lady Maria Walpole married Charles, son of General Churchill, in 1746; they owned Chalfont Park.

² In 1786 the collection was sold, and it took thirty-seven days to disperse it.

as the Sunday's pudding that smokes on his hospitable board." Those were the days of the second Duchess, one of the most charming and attractive of great ladies, the "noble lovely little Peggy" of Prior's lines, born Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, daughter of the second Earl of Oxford. In 1734 she married the second Duke of Portland, whose pleasant personality is sufficiently described by the names by which he was called by his friends—"Sweet William" and "True Blue." The Duchess is well known to us of a later generation through her very intimate friend Mrs. Delany, who was constantly at Bulstrode, and much of whose voluminous correspondence was written from the Portlands' house. A rendezvous at once fashionable and pleasant, it was at the same time a political centre. Here, too, was a fine collection of pictures and much else which was worth seeing—not forgetting wonderful aviaries, for large and small birds from all parts of the world, and a garden filled with many rare flowers. "Every English plant in a separate garden

by themselves," says Mrs. Lybbe Powys of it when she went there in 1769.

Bulstrode, in later years, again became a scene of political life during the time of the third Duke. He was not what one calls a great man, but he was more than a "convenient cipher" as he has been described by a well-known writer. He had sufficient capacity and common-sense to become in the earlier part of his career not only a titular leader of the aristocratic Whigs, but one whose guidance they would follow. His Premiership of the short but famous Coalition Ministry of Fox and North will always make him politically noticeable. With the Duke's accession to office in Pitt's Ministry in 1794 must be dated his open adhesion to Tory principles and the Tory party, which was finally accentuated when he became Prime Minister in 1801. It is noteworthy that Dropmore—but a few miles distant—was the home of Lord Grenville, the statesman whom the Duke not only succeeded, but actively helped to drive from office. Thus Bulstrode had become the head-

quarters of the Tory party, and as much associated with it as it had been at one time with the fortunes of the Rockingham Whigs. For forty-four years the Duke of Portland was closely connected with the politics of his country, and during that time he was constantly at Bulstrode. It was on his way thither that he was seized with the fatal illness which caused him to relinquish the Premiership, after holding it for eight years.

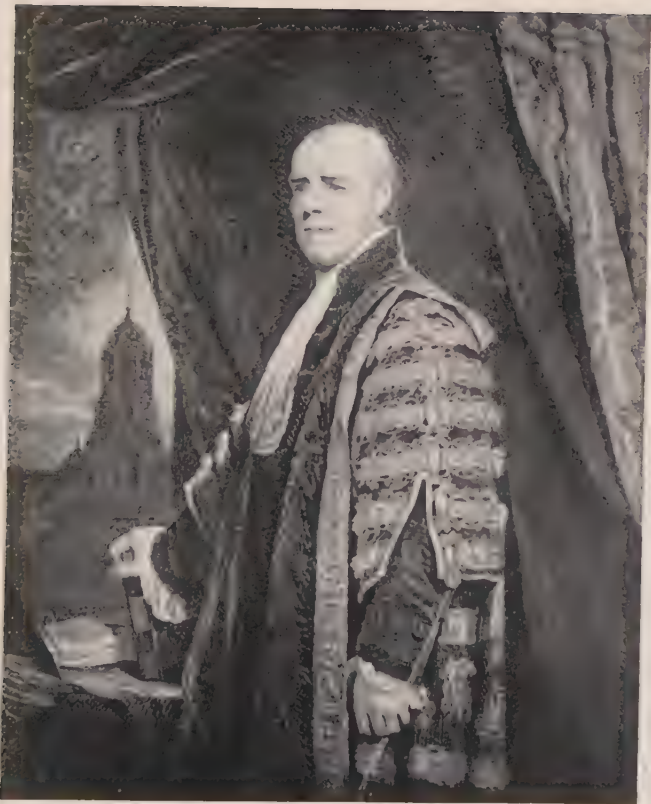
It is but a short walk down the sloping sward of Bulstrode Park, among the oaks which stud the turf, to the gate that leads into the Oxford road. Two miles along this road, past the beeches of Wilton Park, stands Beaconsfield. It was at Beaconsfield that Burke lived; and it was here that he was constantly visited by his personal and his political friends. In the Coalition Ministry Burke was nominally Paymaster-General, but he was in fact, as is well known, one of the great moving forces of the Whig party. It is obvious, then, that the nearness of these two places to each other, inhabited as each was by a great and influential political

leader, made each of much importance in the political history of that time. The broad expanse of undulating turf, the thick and varying foliage of the surrounding woods, the picturesque grouping of the house on the hill, must always cause Bulstrode to be an attractive place to the lover of landscape. And it can never be dissociated from the memory of the Dutchman who became first Earl of Portland, from the history of the Whig party in the days of Fox and Burke, or from the fortunes of the Tories at the beginning of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER X.

DROPMORE AND LORD GRENVILLE.

THE beech woods of Buckinghamshire remind us of the great capacity of England to produce the most stately timber. But a walk through the grounds of Dropmore enables us to realize how well exotic trees can be cultivated in this country if managed with skill and care. For there, not only do spreading beeches and graceful birches and other deciduous trees flourish in strength and beauty, but much rarer specimens delight us with their splendid growth. Solemn cedars raise themselves from the turf, the deodara extends its drooping branches high in the air, pines of various kinds flourish among our own oaks and elms, and here and there an araucaria stands out with motionless stateliness against the sky. Hundreds of rhododendrons, in June masses



WILLIAM WYNDHAM, BARON GRENVILLE

of pink flowers; scores of azaleas, in the early summer bright groups of delicate colours, and in autumn scarcely less beautiful, with red foliage among the darker trunks of the larger trees, add to the wealth of vegetation.¹

To the east of Dropmore, not a quarter of a mile from one of the entrances, anyone walking from East Burnham crosses the gorse- and heath-covered common of Littleworth, backed by low-growing copses.

Dropmore, at the end of the eighteenth century, was a similar bit of waste land. It is no bad plan, therefore, to enter by this gate, so as to realize Lord Grenville's ² work at Dropmore. But it is more usual to approach by the road which leads from Taplow and by Cliveden, and so along the drive which passes the wild and beautiful bit of woodland and heath to the west of the house.

It was at the end of the eighteenth century that Lord Grenville purchased the

¹ The grounds are open to visitors on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday.

² See Appendix, Note H.

site of the present building—about this ugly white mansion it is unnecessary to say anything—and then obtained a grant of the surrounding wastes, at that time a tract of heather and copses. Thenceforward the chief pleasure and occupation of Lord Grenville's life at Dropmore was the planning of walks, the planting of trees and of shrubs. It is not often that the occupations of a statesman in his leisure moments produce an enduring monument ; but Dropmore—as it exists to-day—which was so continuous a pleasure to Lord Grenville to the very time of his death, in January, 1834, forms a memorial of him. On the lawn is the cedar of Lebanon which he planted in 1794, and throughout the grounds are lofty pines which grew up under his eye. More trees were added between the death of Lord Grenville and that of his wife in 1863, and the present remarkable collection owes not a little to her continuing care.

It is scarcely possible in these days to realize the high political position held at one time by the Grenville family, and especially

by Lord Grenville. Unlike his neighbour and successor in office, the Duke of Portland, Lord Grenville was first a Tory and then a Whig. As leader of the Government in the House of Lords and Foreign Secretary in Pitt's Administration from 1791 to 1801, he held a place second only to the Prime Minister, and was identified in the public mind with the Continental struggles of the country. He had previously for a short time been Speaker of the House of Commons, and had before filled various subordinate offices, which had early in his life drawn public attention to him. But his position before the country was much improved by his independent action in regard to Catholic emancipation, and by his relinquishment of office with Pitt in 1801. The very shortness of his own administration in 1806 and 1807 was in itself a tribute to his character. The King was never friendly, and his own Cabinet contained hostile elements. He carried a measure to abolish the slave trade, and he went out of office for the second time on the subject of Catholic emancipation.

His position as head of the Whig Opposition during the Regency, the universal respect in which he was held by all parties for what Lord Holland has well termed "his inflexible steadiness" and "his upright and manly character," make the last years of the reign of George III. those in which he perhaps stood highest in the estimation of his countrymen. His political place in history has been thus summarized :—

"Circumstances had made him one of the leaders of the Opposition during the second Ministry of Pitt, and so he came into office as one of the chiefs of the Whig party. He is thus a link between the Tory administrations of the end of the eighteenth, and the Whig Oppositions and the Whig Ministries of the beginning of the nineteenth century. The characteristics of his own Administration have been touched upon; it was a moderate Liberal Ministry in its views and objects. When Grenville went again into Opposition, it should have been as leader of a moderate Liberal Opposition, having in view not purely party objects, but the wel-

fare of the country. Clearly Grenville could never have been a great party leader, for he regarded politics from too critical, too unimpassioned, and too impersonal a point of view. He was without the personal ambition which causes a party leader to regard the prosperity of his party as synonymous with the welfare of his country. If he had been one, he would after his fall—which, indeed, a skilful politician would certainly have avoided—soon have found means to return to power. But it is one of the first reasons why Lord Grenville should be sure of honourable recollection by posterity, that at a period of great political intrigue he kept himself free from it, and that he identified the Parliamentary Opposition with an opposition to measures and policies because they were, in his opinion, intrinsically injurious to the country, and not because antagonism to them would benefit his party. Thus politically and historically Lord Grenville occupies a peculiar place. He was an advanced Liberal in his theory of the relations of Ministers, King, and Parliament,

and in his economical views; he was a patriotic Liberal in his measures and in his opposition. Amid intrigues, amid intense personal struggles, amidst Court influences of the most varied kind, amidst popular excitement and great national dangers, he looked straight to the national welfare, to it subordinated all personal considerations. Family connections caused him in the beginning of his career to join a Tory Government, though one not without many Liberal elements; but the natural qualities of his mind, and all his political sympathies, made him complete his political career as an independent Liberal.

"If Lord Grenville was without the mastery of mankind exhibited by his great contemporaries Pitt and Fox, if he had not the political wisdom of Burke or the practical sagacity of Lord Grey, he must yet be regarded by succeeding generations as the type of an eminently patriotic, liberal, and moderate-minded statesman."¹

¹ *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1888, vol. clxviii. p. 309.

Nothing emphasizes history so much as the possibility of realizing the men who have made it. Dropmore is one of the places which helps us to penetrate into what Charles de Remusat has called "l'intimité des caractères"; it reveals to us something of the character of Lord Grenville. For as we walk under these trees it is impossible not to realize to some extent his personality in later life. He was a *grand seigneur*, a statesman, and a scholar; but he was wholly without country tastes, except his one absorbing interest in trees and flowers. This was so strong that even in the most important political crises—as in that of 1812, after the death of Mr. Perceval, when offers of office were made to him and to Lord Grey—his "Dropmore sympathies," as his brother calls them, were uppermost in his mind. It is a curious coincidence that the devotion of Lord Grenville to Dropmore and his personal care of every tree equalled Lord Grey's love of Howick and his lifelong attention to the management of his shrubberies and woods. The most insignificant bit of copsewood was

not too small for Lord Grenville's care, and his sense of landscape beauty is seen to this day at what is known as the Root Mount. Passing from a pleasantly-shaded walk, a gentle ascent leads to a projection high above the trees and clumps below our feet. Beyond the immediate glades a mass of woodland stretches to the south, in the evening sunlight a shimmer of light and shade. The shining line of the Thames is seen, and the stately towers of Windsor; the gentle outlines of the Surrey hills strike the eye; and when Lord Grenville stood here, before the trees beyond increased in height, he could see Cæsar's Camp at Easthampstead.

For many years, between the Dropmore of the past and of the present, a link existed in the person of Frost, the head gardener. As far back as 1819 he was in the service of Lord Grenville, and he had the good fortune to live to see this magnificent collection of forest trees and flowering shrubs grow under his care, in many instances from tiny seedlings. This active and capable octogenarian was eighty-two when he died, in Janu-

ary, 1887. His bright and interesting reminiscences used to help much to recall the past. He could show Lord Grenville's favourite walk in the pinetum, the rustic room away among the trees where his coffee was served on summer afternoons, and tell how the planting was done under the Prime Minister's own eye.¹

The Root Mount was built under his personal supervision. He was so well pleased by the good work which was being done by his men, that on one occasion he sent them all into the house to eat and drink. He had a kindly and courtly word for everyone he met, and "this proud man," as Pitt called

¹ The following letter shows the interest which Lord Grenville took in his plantations :—

" ST JAMES'S SQUARE,

" *November 7, 1792.*

" MY DEAR BROTHER,—The trees arrived safe at Dropmore yesterday, and we were at their unpacking in the middle of such a fog as I never saw before. They will answer admirably well for my purpose, and will make a great figure on my hill in the course of a century or so."—"Memoirs of the Court and Cabinets of George III.," vol. ii., p. 221.

him, saluted the poorest cottager as courteously as the most important of his neighbours. While thus kind, and also generous and open-handed, he was yet a man who seldom spoke twice if he was not obeyed ; the second fault was the signal for dismissal. While he allowed Lady Grenville to be uncontrolled mistress of the flower-garden, he was autocrat of the trees and shrubs. Even when his tall and handsome form was no longer seen moving along the walks, and he was only able to be wheeled about the grounds in a chair, he was still ever interested in watching over the trees already growing, and considering with his gardener a place for new plantations. The cedar of Lebanon on the lawn has already been mentioned. Perhaps the finest of the other trees is a *Pinus Douglasii* planted in 1827, whose great trunk and spreading foliage is a beautiful sight. To enumerate the various trees which can be seen would be impossible. The soil is naturally unfavourable to pines ; they were therefore planted in sound mould, and from time to time fresh

mould has been added on the surface. Thus the grounds of Dropmore remain not only a memorial of Lord Grenville, but are an example and a reproach to many. They show what care and judgment can do to make waste places beautiful, and their very luxuriance emphasizes by contrast the neglect and thoughtlessness which characterizes the ownership of so much of English woodland.

CHAPTER XI.

THE HOMES OF THE DISRAELIS.¹

“ AT the foot of the Berkshire Downs, and itself on a gentle elevation, there is an old hall with gable ends and lattice windows, standing in grounds which once were stately and where there are yet glade-like terraces of yew-trees, which give an air of dignity to a neglected scene. In the front of the hall huge gates of iron, highly wrought, and bearing an ancient date as well as the shield of a noble house, opened on a village green, round which were clustered the cottages of the parish with only one exception, and that was the vicarage house, a modern building, not without taste, and surrounded by a small but brilliant garden. The church was contiguous to the hall, and had been raised by the lord on a portion of his domain. Behind

¹ See Appendix, Note I.

the hall and its enclosure the country was common-land, but picturesque. It had once been a beech-forest, and though the timber had been greatly cleared, the green land was still occasionally dotted, sometimes with groups, and sometimes with single trees, while the juniper which here abounded, and rose to a great height, gave a rich wildness to the scene, and sustained its forest character."

When Lord Beaconsfield thus described in "Endymion" the place which he calls Hurstley, he was seventy-six, and he had achieved an astonishing success as a man of letters and a statesman; yet Bradenham, disguised as Hurstley, was evidently as clearly mirrored in his mind at that moment—at the very end of his life—as it was when his father left Bloomsbury Square in 1829, and made a new home by renting the old manor-house in the Buckinghamshire Uplands. The hold on the younger Disraeli which Buckinghamshire always had is as remarkable as the change in the elder Disraeli's life, by the move from London to

the Wycombe Valley is extraordinary. Isaac Disraeli was a man of letters, not of the pensive, poetical kind, but of the active reference-seeking sort, "a complete literary character, a man who really passed his life in his library," and who in London loved "to ramble among booksellers' shops." In this manner the younger Disraeli described his father in the introduction to the 1849 edition of the "Curiosities of Literature." His work had been largely based on extensive if not profound research, and he had been engaged in more than one literary controversy which made some stir in its time. This active-minded and busy literary worker suddenly took flight from all his associates and associations, and from the pleasant social life which he enjoyed, to a lonely old country house then remote, as his son says, from any railway communication, and even to-day, to say the least, secluded and removed from towns and town life. Yet this was not a move into an absolutely strange land, for, townsman though he was, Isaac Disraeli had known Buckingham-

shire for many years. Pye, the Poet Laureate, had about 1812 introduced him to Mr. John Penn of Stoke Park, the grandson of William Penn, who had some appreciation of literature, though, as the hideous monument which he placed to Gray in the field behind the famous church shows, little of art. From Stoke Poges, Disraeli gradually became acquainted with the adjoining part of an attractive district, and thus through the indirect influence of a descendant of William Penn finally made his home at Bradenham.

To-day we may, if we chose, go to Bradenham, and see it as it was in Disraeli's days of youth. The place stands somewhat aside from the main road up the Wycombe Valley, on the rising ground under the shelter of the hillside—a secluded little community. The manor-house is still in form the same. The trees around it are no doubt changed, but there are still the striking iron gates, the quiet common, the small adjacent cottages, and the Norman church hard by—a charming rural scene, interesting, as so many picturesque places in South Buckingham-

shire are, from its personal associations. At the manor-house Isaac Disraeli led a solitary life, rarely going beyond his garden, and taking no interest in outside affairs ; but his unvarying cheerfulness kept him happy even when he became hopelessly blind, and he lived on after this blow in a tranquil and restful solitude for another nine years.

It was in the early years of Benjamin Disraeli's life at Bradenham that his love of the characteristic scenery of the Chilterns became an ingrained part of his nature. Then it was that he had time to ramble about the hillsides, to see the beech-woods in their delicate spring foliage, and in the splendour of their autumn leafage :—" It was a still, mild day in November, a month which in the country, and especially in the light soils, has many charms. . . . The leaf had changed, but had not fallen, and the vast spiral masses of the dark green juniper effectively contrasted with the rich brown foliage of the beech, varied occasionally by the scarlet leaves of the wild cherry-tree."

It is not difficult to imagine Gray wander-

ing among the "venerable beeches" of Burnham; it is less easy to picture the young Disraeli, full of political and literary ambitions, whose burning desire was to shine in senates and salons, passing solitary hours in climbing the beech-clad sides of the Chilterns. But unquestionably the elms of Eton and the churchyard of Stoke Poges were not more vividly impressed on the mind of the poet than were the juniper-covered commons of Buckinghamshire and the old church of Bradenham on the statesman's memory. Not that the young Disraeli was at this time by any means only a recluse in the manor-house. "*Vivian Grey*" was published in 1826, and this book at once gave him some notoriety in London society. In the same year he made a long foreign tour with the Austens, and another in 1830, the year after his father took Bradenham, of which his letters to his sister have told us in detail, from which he returned in 1831. "*The Young Duke*" was published in the latter year, and "*Contarini Fleming*" in 1832. In London Benjamin Disraeli was

to be met at well-known houses, especially at Lord Lyndhurst's, so that his days at Bradenham were few and restful, and we may very well assume that in his walks about Naphill Common and its surrounding woods he thought out his novels and built those political castles in the air which, unlike most such structures, were ultimately to become facts.

It was from Bradenham that in 1832 Disraeli descended in a political whirlwind, as an independent candidate, on the astonished little borough of High Wycombe, twice in that year—in June and December—offering himself unsuccessfully as a non-party candidate, or “independent neighbour,” as he described himself, “wearing,” as he ostentatiously proclaimed, “the badge of no party and the livery of no faction.”

The broad High Street of Wycombe, terminated by its red-brick eighteenth-century town-hall, is the same now as when Disraeli sought to represent the borough in Parliament. A defiant-looking lion still catches the eye in front of the chief hotel,

irresistibly recalling the now distant scene when, says Disraeli, writing to Mrs. Austen, "feeling it was the crisis, I jumped upon the portico of the Red Lion"—there is an adjacent window from which this place can be reached—"and gave it them for an hour and a quarter. I can give you no idea of the effect ; I made them all mad."

But to the quietude of Bradenham Disraeli had for a time to retire to continue his musings and his rambles about the hills and woods in the intervals of his meteoric appearances as a Macaroni—as eighteenth-century people would have called him—in town. A more singular contrast between the two kinds of life cannot easily be imagined, nor can we well think of one who would be less contented—with his orientally ambitious dreams—with the quiet scenes and secluded life of the Chiltern hillsides. Yet if one thing in Disraeli's life is more certain than another, it is that those places were engraved on his memory and his affections.

In December, 1834, Disraeli was for the

third time a candidate for High Wycombe, and in January, 1835—for in those days elections lasted long—was again at the bottom of the poll. In 1837, however, he became member for Maidstone; and in the autumn of 1848, after the death of his father, he completed the purchase of the Hughenden estate,¹ which was not far from Bradenham, up another of the small chalk valleys of the Chilterns, and so for its remaining years his life was linked permanently with a district and a county with which in the first instance he had become associated by the merest and most unforeseen of chances.

Hughenden is not a large place. It is a

¹ The original manor-house was called Rockhalls and was on the opposite ridge, where Brands House now stands. Formerly a farm-house, with arable land extending from its southern front, stood on the site of Hughenden House. The estate of Hughenden was purchased by Mr. Charles Savage about 1738, and he converted the old farm-house into a more commodious residence. The park was laid out and gradually enlarged by his successors and by Mr. Norris, a subsequent owner, from whose representatives it was purchased in 1848. See "Records of Buckinghamshire," vol. vii., p. 387.



long, low, but dignified house, which the surrounding conifers and beeches almost hide from view at a distance, so that its dominating situation on the summit of a ridge is scarcely appreciated. On the north it is sheltered by extensive woodlands; a stone's-throw distant is the pleasant vicarage; and below, on the edge of the park, almost hidden, too, by the sheltering trees, is the ancient church. The place satisfied Disraeli's feeling—if not for luxury and splendour, yet for space and comfort. Disraeli, I have said elsewhere, “had none of what are called the country gentleman's tastes, but he had that fine sense which finds an enjoyment partly sensuous and partly intellectual in the aspect of the country—in its colour and its stillness, in its variety and its spaciousness, in its old buildings and its historic associations. All these characteristics were to be found within a few miles of Disraeli's home. From Burke to Hampden, from Hampden to Wycliffe, and from Wycliffe to the Norman Barons, the county evidenced the formation

of the English people, while in the secluded valleys and among the immense beech-woods and on the steep escarpments of the Chilterns one met with a delightful series of landscapes."

Hughenden henceforth became Disraeli's resting-place, a retreat alike for mind and body, not, though important persons were often visitors, a political centre, as Dropmore or Bulstrode had each been in the eighteenth century, but more resembling in its atmosphere and life, in the owner's enjoyment of his estate, of his animals, and of his birds, the famous home of Burke at Beaconsfield. It is certainly strange that, when the day came for Disraeli to confer a peerage on his wife, and subsequently to accept one for himself, he took neither the title of Hughenden nor Bradenham, but that of Beaconsfield, a place with which, though not distant, he had no personal or paternal connection, and with which another historic name is for ever associated.

The further we find ourselves from the time of Lord Beaconsfield's life, the more

vividly we realize how exceptional and how strange it was. What can be more dramatic, bearing in mind personal circumstances, than that, in the evening of his life, Lord Beaconsfield used to walk about the very countryside between Hughenden and Bradenham, which years before he had known so well. The scenes of youth and age, of the days of struggle and fruition, are seldom so closely linked as they are in the case of Lord Beaconsfield. One can on a summer afternoon reach the two houses—the two homes—the monument of Isaac Disraeli at Bradenham, and of his son in Hughenden Church. One may see the modest monument of the father in one church, outside the other the ornate grave of the son, in which are also laid the two women to whom he was a hero, and who helped him so much. Inside is the tablet, shaded by the insignia of the Order of the Garter, which was erected by a grateful Sovereign and friend to her Minister, in some respects the most un-English of men, who is laid to rest in the most characteristically English scenery.

Here one may recall Disraeli's love of the charming landscape of Buckinghamshire, its beech-woods, its cherry-orchards, its old churches, and its secluded villages, always existing—an ever-interesting psychological fact—behind the most grandiose political ideas, and not destroyed by nights and days of the sharpest political conflict. It reveals strange contrasts of character and depths of feeling, which it was Disraeli's habit to hide from the world.

CHAPTER XII.

CHEQUERS COURT AND FRANCES CROMWELL.

CHEQUERS COURT was built in the middle of the sixteenth century but its original architectural character was more than once altered by Georgian and later additions. To-day some of these structural incongruities have been removed, and it remains an interesting, if not a striking, example of Elizabethan architecture. Whether it be approached from Butler's Cross by a deep chalk lane overhung with beech-trees, or along the breezy heights of Combe Hill, whence you look down on the park, and the house lying in a grassy gap of the Chilterns, the place seems to have a local individuality in harmony with the surrounding scenery. On one side rises the rounded hilltop of Cymbeline's Mount, from which, perhaps, the

warriors of the British King looked northward over the marshy pastures of the Vale of Aylesbury ; to the south the beech-covered sides of Combe Hill remind us of the thick woodlands which once wholly overspread the slopes of the Chiltern range. Here in the thirteenth century a man who was called Elias de Scaccarius had his home—Elias Chakers, as his name is translated, probably some wealthy official connected with the Exchequer. Through a long line of successors — Hawtreys, Crokes — Chequers came at length by the marriage of Colonel Charles Russell with Joanna Cutts Revett, whose mother, Joanna Thurbane, was heiress by will of Mary, the last of the Crokes, into the Russell family.

Colonel Russell was the great-grandson of Cromwell, and it is through his marriage with Serjeant Thurbane's child that there came to Chequers, not only portraits and relics of Cromwell, but letters,¹ from which

¹ Hist. MSS. Commission. Report of the MSS. of Mrs. Frankland-Russell-Astley of Chequers Court, Bucks [c-282], 1900.

we are able to gather some details of the long life of Cromwell's youngest daughter.

In 1657 Cromwell had reached the highest point of power. Abroad, by his defence of Protestantism, and by his persistent and successful vindication of the growing commerce of England, he had placed his country in a position she had not held since the days of Elizabeth ; at home, though he had refused the offer of the crown, he had, on June 26, been installed Protector for the second time with increased authority, and endowed with a real sovereignty. In the same eventful year his two youngest daughters, Mary, and Frances who was then seventeen, for she was born in 1638, were married, the one to Lord Fauconberg, the other to Robert Rich, grandson and heir-presumptive of the Earl of Warwick. But for some time before the marriage of the Earl of Warwick's heir with Frances Cromwell a domestic drama of no little interest had been in progress. Early in 1656 young Rich and Frances Cromwell had plighted their troth. By the Warwicks the engagement was warmly approved, but

Cromwell at once set his face against it, and for three months no progress was made, and then the Protector and Lord Warwick began, in Mary Cromwell's words, "to treat about the estate." But she tells us that Lord Warwick offered less than Cromwell expected, though at the same time she suggests that this was a mere excuse on the part of the Protector, the true reason of his action being a dislike to young Rich. Frances Cromwell had a good deal both of her father's temper and resolution, and this opposition fortified her determination, and she engaged her sister Mary and all her friends to speak with her father on her behalf. Cromwell, behind his rough speech and rugged manner, had a soft heart for his children, and yielding to her importunity, promised his daughter that the question of the estate should not break off the engagement. Then negotiations recommenced, Lord Warwick telling Cromwell that he would do his utmost to satisfy him; but again difficulties arose, the chief being the question of a settlement of a particular sum which was

the absolute property of Lord Rich. So affairs stood in the early summer of 1656. Frances Cromwell and Robert Rich were determined to be married; the Warwicks were doing their utmost to conclude the engagement, and Cromwell was lukewarm, if he was not actually opposing it.

The conditions which at length satisfied the Protector we know from the terms of the proposed marriage settlement. On his side Cromwell was prepared to settle £15,000 on his daughter, and this he did, the estate of Newhall, in Essex, once the property of the Duke of Buckingham, being the security for this portion. The Earl of Warwick was to settle his whole estate, worth about £8,000 per annum, with Warwick House, and if Lady Frances survived her husband, she was to receive a jointure of £2,000 a year.¹ Perhaps the Protector expected to break off the engagement by "high demands," for old Lord Warwick had written to his grandson on May 28, 1656:—

"I fear my Lord Protector does not

¹ Thurloe's "Collection of State Papers," vi. 573.

mean you shall have his daughter ; his demands are so high in things that cannot be granted, for you know what ado I have had with your father about them. And the more trust my Lord Protector leaves with me 'twill be the better for you. . . . But if my Lord Protector insists upon these high demands, your business will soon be at an end, for I assure you nothing could have made me come to half that I have offered but seeing your great affection to my Lady Frances and her good respect to you."

But Frances, affectionate and self-willed, had set her heart on marrying Robert Rich, and he was equally anxious to make her his wife, and this determination, with the help of Lord Warwick, at last prevailed. Robert Rich was a delicate and rather odd young man, and with all his affection Lord Warwick was not able to refrain from venting on him some of the boisterous humour for which he was notorious. "Thou small cur," he begins, apparently in 1657, "yet a cur to the best, finest lady in the world, there

is nothing can excuse you from running away but the hope I have you have since seen your happiness ; but be of good comfort for a few days, for in one seven-nights your sun shall shine on you to a lasting comfort if you continue worthy of her favour, and so, small white cur, God bless thee! Your grandsire as you please." The letter was dated : " From your mistress' chamber, this Wednesday afternoon," and was endorsed by Lady Frances : " L. Warwick, in a pleasant humour."

At last every difficulty was overcome, and on November 17, Frances Cromwell and Robert Rich were married, all things seeming to portend for her a happy and illustrious life.

But the fateful year 1658 had scarcely begun when the misfortunes of the lately united families commenced. On February 16 Robert Rich died. He was certainly a weakly young man, and perhaps this was one reason for Cromwell's dislike to the marriage ; but that he had engaging qualities cannot be doubted, or he would hardly have

held the place he did in Lord Warwick's affection, who, in reply to Cromwell's letter of condolence, dwelt on the "dear and comfortable relation, one in whom I had much determined my affections and lodged my hopes, which are now rebuked and withered by a hasty and early death." Perhaps the loss of his grandson hastened Warwick's death, for he, too, died in the following month; and in August Frances Rich lost her sister, Elizabeth Claypole, for whom the whole family had an extreme affection. But, supreme disaster of all, Cromwell himself passed away on September 3, so that no contrast could be more striking than that between the Christmas of 1657 and the Christmas of 1658, between the happiness of one December and the sadness of the next.

Some lives are dogged by an adverse fate, and it was Frances Cromwell's lot to obtain happiness only to lose it. A girl of seventeen was sure soon to recover from the severest affliction, and we see her again in 1662, doubtless more attractive from the



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FRANCES CROMWELL, LADY RUSSELL

experiences of the intervening years. She is being courted by Sir John Russell, of Chippenham, a pleasant and manly country gentleman, who was desperately in love with the young widow. In their correspondence there is little sign of the Puritanism of Frances Cromwell's upbringing, while in Sir John's letters there is an agreeable tinge of the distressful lover, of the amatory poetry of Lovelace and Waller, without the exaggeration and affectation which would have been absurd in a sensible man.

To expressions of love Lady Frances replies with a studied artificiality, broken now and again by an irrepressible flash of her natural gaiety, as when she alludes to Sir John's liking for Newmarket Heath :—

“I am very sorry you have entertained an affection which proves so troublesome to you, and hope you will not wonder if I take care to preserve myself from the passion which has done you so much mischief. You are too reasonable to interpret this slighting of you, for I consider you so much

herein as to make you my example, and for your sake am an enemy to that wicked disease called love, because it handles you so severely. I assure you, Sir, I so far sympathize with you as upon your account to be afraid of it, and advise you as soon as possibly you can to rid yourself of such an uncivil guest. Surely that which unmans you, which torments you with much fear, grief, and impatience, which disturbs your rest, denies you the common benefit of air—and so near Newmark[et] Heath, too—and turns all your breath into sighs, must needs be very dangerous to a poor silly woman. You have no reason to complain of these lines, because they express as much charity and care for you as faithfulness to myself. You are too honest to wish another infected because you are sick. I hope your recovery, and if I have not forgotten the content of your last, I think I have more than satisfied your own desire, for you were so reasonable as to consider my poverty, and so only requested one line."

But Lady Frances was not long in a wavering mood, and apparently in 1663 she wrote this charming note :—

“ I have received yours, and have only now time to thank you for the very great expressions of love I find in it. I will not now complain of you or chide you, otherwise I could take it ill you should, after all that has passed between yourself and me, say you are in a doubt whether I love you ; nor can I allow you to mention so much your suffering upon my account, since I must tell you my usage has been very favourable ; but I excuse all such escapes of your pen, as proceeding from an extravagant passion, and for your sake wish the object of it more considerable. To make it so is the account your fuller satisfaction is delayed, and till those affairs depending are ripened, be content with the very good fortune you have hitherto had, and as patiently as you can, lengthen out your consideration and respect of her who has, she thinks, very early put you into a capacity of pretending to her and

deserved the expectation. At Mr. White's return from Hursley, you shall hear further."

Sir John Russell and Frances Rich were married on May 7, 1663, and they settled down, as one might have hoped, to a happy and uneventful life. Sir John was evidently often in London, and sometimes at Newmarket, whence he writes, giving incidentally small details of the life of a sportsman in the seventeenth century.

Lady Russell's letters are in the same homely strain. She cannot return to him, because "the horses are at plough," but she hopes that he will have plenty of company and "a good dinner."

Other letters in the Chequers Court collection from Sir John tell of family business at such times as he was in London. They bring us to February, 1670, when there is a letter from Lady Russell, pathetic in view of approaching, and by her unforeseen, events, for the happiness which is visible in every line was soon to be destroyed. Evidently she was on a visit to London, staying

with her sister, Lady Fauconberg, mingling in the society of the Court, though she was a daughter of the late Protector.

“Although I am got well to this place, where, as you told me, I should be received with a great deal of joy and kindness, yet methinks I want thy dear self to complete this present pleasure which I now enjoy. I can most truly assure thee that as well as I love this place, and as much respect and fondness, as I meet with from my dear sister and other persons, yet I could not live contented here without thee. Last night your Uncle Chicheley and Mr. Secretary supped here, and I find that it is thought necessary for you to come up yourself about the business with your Uncle R[ussell], and, should any difference arise between you, then is the time for your Uncle C[hicheley] and Mr. Secretary to umpire between you.

“There is little of news stirring. The pretty widow is now sick of the small-pox, but the danger is past. The little Cavendish heir died last night of a consumption,

which has caused a great deal of sadness at Southampton House. I have received visits and compliments from every[one] but Lady Poul[et?], who, I hear, is very angry at your last letter to her Lord. I pray God bless my dear, and send him safe to his most passionately fond, dearly [loving] wife.

“*Postscript.*—I pray God bless my dear, dear sweet babes. Kiss them over and over from their poor mamma. I long to hear how you all do. Give my service to Lady Russell, and a kiss to my little patient.”

This is Lady Russell's last letter to her husband, for in March Sir John died, and at the age of thirty-two Frances Cromwell became a second time a widow. She was the mother of three sons and a daughter. Betty Russell and her mother remind us of Beatrix Esmond and Lady Castlewood ; but no Henry Esmond came to fill the vacant place by Lady Russell's side, and her affection was concentrated, even jealously, on her children, and more especially on her daughter.

Lady Russell was a quick-witted and

cultivated woman, but in these later years had a temper made sharp by sorrow. "My Lady Russell," wrote her brother-in-law, Lord Fauconberg, to Sir William Frankland, "being, it seems, in a good humour on the Gunpowder Treason night, writ to her son a letter in verse, to which he, not being poetical given, your young gentleman has taken up the cudgels so ingeniously that I thought it would displease neither yourself nor my sister to pay threepence for it." A little later this same correspondent gives us a glimpse of Miss Russell—"so admirable a creature both in mind and body," that her uncle thinks that Lady Russell will not keep her long. He was right, for a husband presently appeared in Thomas Frankland, the eldest son of Sir William Frankland, of Thirkleby, in Yorkshire, the young man who had taken up the poetical cudgels with Lady Russell, and for whom she seems to have had a motherly interest, helping from time to time in his education. He and Betty Russell were married in 1683, but from some cause or other the course of their married

life was at first far from smooth. Lord Fauconberg suggests that Lady Russell was at the bottom of these differences. "Lady R. is so extravagantly fond of her daughter that from a causeless jealousy of being less beloved by her than ——, some disorders might possibly have been derived to the family if your son had not managed the matter with great skill." However, after a troublesome year, affairs settled down, and we lose sight, save for a glimpse or two, of mother and daughter and Sir Thomas, as he was to be.

It is sad to think of Lady Russell, so tried in her young years, vexed with money matters as she grew old. At the Restoration Newhall had been bestowed on the Duke of Albemarle, so that henceforth Lady Russell must have had only the jointure settled upon her by Lord Warwick, and even this she may have lost on her second marriage. Her son was extravagant, not, it would seem, from any vicious habits, but from simple incapacity to manage his affairs. Chippenham had been sold, but the proceeds

had soon been spent, and by 1689 both Lady Russell and her son were seriously embarrassed. Their position afforded an opportunity to an anonymous friend to write to Sir William frankly and sensibly of his and his mother's affairs. The writer recognised him "as a man of honour, sincerity, and integrity, and of an obliging and generous temper (even to a fault)"; but he knew, too, that his "circumstances were very narrow," and that he had made them "narrower." Young Russell had taken part in the welcome of William III. and had evidently lavished money which he could ill afford on making a gallant show before the new King and his Dutch followers, an extravagance which produced a caustic rebuke from his experienced friend. "If," he says, "the success of the Protestant religion and the liberties of the nation had depended solely upon your life and fortune, it had not only been prudent, but most honourable and your duty to have sacrificed the last drop of your blood, as well as the last farthing of your estate, in the service; but to spend all

a man has upon fine clothes and a costly equipage, and to fare deliciously every day, is not to serve a man's country and the Protestant interest, but his own lust and vanity, and ends in contempt as well as ruin. . . . I understand that all the money that you allotted to your own use out of what you received for Chippenham is confounded and spent, and that, after all, your necessities are so dangerously growing upon you that you cannot resist them without a present considerable supply, which, for all that I can find, must be done too by plucking a feather where there grows none—I mean from your mother, who is now upon sending you all that which was allotted for paying off her debts. Give me leave to tell you, sir, this is a very hard game she hath to play, and it requires your serious consideration. It seems her choice must be this—to wrong her creditors (and consequently be a prisoner in her own house into the bargain), or to see her son ruined.” And the candid friend concludes with a piece of advice which throws an interesting gleam of light on the character

of the King. "Let me advise you," he says, "as a friend, to do it so that the King may neither see or hear of it, for I'll assure you that there can be no worse way in the world of making one's court to the King than by extravagancy, and no better way than by diligence and good husbandry . . . for I know his Majesty so well that he'll never have any great confidence in a man that is an ill-husband, for he believes, and that with great reason, that a man who cannot manage his own private concerns as he ought, will never be capable of managing that of the public."

That similar difficulties were troubling Lady Russell quite at the end of her life is also evident from a combative little note of her own, dated July 12, 1713, to the effect that it had been alleged by some of the Russells that she brought nothing into the family. Then she refers to an enclosure (now lost) as evidence that she had money.

In the shadow of domestic anxieties we have to leave Lady Russell, the once bright Frances Cromwell of 1657. In the gloomy

portrait at Chequers Court we can read her history. The strong, square features have grown harsh ; the mouth, once expressive of resolution, now with its closely-pressed lips, betrays the habitual repression of feeling ; the lines of the nose tell of anxieties and sorrow ; while the weariness of the eyes of this elderly woman, shrouded about her head with a black veil, reveal a life of trials, of grief and vexation. Gazing on her, we can scarcely realize that she was the same who wrote the pleasant and happy letters of her earlier years. Surviving all her brothers and sisters, her life was long, and in many ways remarkable, darkened, as we have seen, by personal disappointments and sorrows. She who, just as life was opening, had seen her father's system of government destroyed, saw the Stuarts lose the throne a second time, and was a witness of the party struggles of the reign of Anne, and of the accession of the House of Hanover. The girl who had talked with Milton and Marvell and Waller lived to read the writings of Swift and Addison and Pope, for she did

not die until January 27, 1721, at the age of eighty-two, sixty odd years since the Wednesday in November when, at Whitehall, the Lord Protector and his family, and "many other persons of high honour and quality," happily unconscious of impending catastrophes, had witnessed the wedding of Frances Cromwell. Such is the life-story which the letters still stored at Chequers Court tell, adding to the many memories of the seventeenth century, with which the country of Penn and Hampden is so rich.

CHAPTER XIII.

SHELLEY¹ AND HIS CIRCLE AT MARLOW.

IT is surprising that the Marlow period in Shelley's life has never been completely pictured, and its significance as an indication of Shelley's character strangely overlooked. The time which the poet and a group of relatives and intimate friends—his Circle as it may properly be termed—passed at Marlow becomes well defined and suggestive, if a number of scattered details are collected from books and correspondence of which Shelley and those who formed his Circle are the subjects. For once in his life Shelley ceased to be a wanderer, and Marlow is the only place either in England or in Italy which can, even for a short space, be definitely associated with him as a home.

During the six or seven months of Shel-

¹ See Appendix, Note J.

ley's sojourn at Marlow, there ensued for him a completeness of existence which he never knew before or after. Intellectual achievement was mingled with constant enjoyment of the open air, and to tranquil domestic happiness was added agreeable and congenial social intercourse. At Marlow some strongly opposite characteristics of Shelley's nature were contemporaneously apparent. He was at once a dreamer and a man essentially practical. One day he was lying under the swaying willows, living among visions of the imagination which only his immense capacity of verbal expression enabled him to describe, and the next his mind was busy with practical schemes of parliamentary reform or of social assistance to the poor. At Marlow, Shelley was at once an imaginative poet, and in some degree a man of action, and only at Marlow are we enabled to realize his character in its essential completeness and to surmise the manner in which, had he lived longer in a favourable milieu, the altruism in his nature might have matured and developed.

When in the beginning of March (9-16), 1817, Shelley and Mary Godwin, his wife—as she now in fact was, for they had been married in the previous December after Harriet Shelley's death—began to live at Albion House, they hoped, and intended, that it would become their permanent home. Shelley had leased for a long term the pleasant and old-fashioned house in West Street, a thoroughfare leading up the hill to the woods which, then as to-day, cover the last escarpments of the Chilterns as they break off in white cliffs above the reaches of the Thames. The one spacious room in the house was Shelley's library—well filled with books, among them the Homer, the Æschylus and the Plato, which formed the main part of his reading at the time. Casts of Apollo and Venus gave the room a classical dignity. The garden behind was open and pleasant, but the house was cold and damp, unsuited to delicate beings, as Shelley admitted after he had ceased to live in it, though probably as habitable as most houses of the kind in those



From a photo: Frith & Co.

SHELLEY'S HOUSE, GREAT MARLOW

days in the Thames Valley. At any rate, it was quiet without being remote. To-day we may see it outwardly unchanged, one of a row of modest dwellings. In Shelley's time it stood apart, yet at no long distance from the centre of the little town, where the Crown Inn looked down the broad main street to the Thames, across which in those days a wooden bridge led into Berkshire.

As Ellwood found a home for Milton at Chalfont St. Giles so Thomas Love Peacock brought Shelley to Marlow. There Peacock had lived with his mother since 1815, and was just beginning the series of * novels which soon became popular, and which nowadays are so difficult to read. Under forty, but older than Shelley, Peacock was his most trusted friend. Not that Shelley needed much persuasion from Peacock to settle at Marlow, for he was already a lover of the Thames. In 1815 he and Mary Godwin lived for a time in a furnished house on the borders of Windsor Park, and in the autumn of that year Peacock, Charles

Clairmont, Mary Godwin and Shelley made a boating expedition as far up the river as Lechlade.

Shelley was fortunate in that since his grandfather's death in 1815, he had an assured income of £1,000 a year, amply sufficient for the wants of a simple household and of a vegetarian poet. But, unluckily, there was an impecunious and demanding father-in-law, and a circle of friends—not to speak of Charles Clairmont who wrote begging letters from foreign spas—most of them hard up and only too anxious to take advantage of Shelley's generous nature and to share in his income. But, at first at any rate, the time seemed to have arrived, the serener hour to have come, when Shelley might look forward to a peaceful and intellectual existence with Mary, the most sympathetic of wives and companions, and with their children.

It was then in the spring of 1817 that Shelley and his wife left Bath and appeared at Marlow, where they dwelt till February, 1818. It is indeed an unforgettable episode.

Shelley was the central figure of a remarkable group the more striking from its local and commonplace setting, its intellectual opposition to everything around it, and its social isolation. "He held no intercourse with his immediate neighbours. He said to me (Peacock) more than once, 'I am not wretch enough to tolerate an acquaintance.'"

There was not a more old-world place than Marlow, nor a country-side more socially and politically sluggish than the quiet rural districts on either side of the Thames, and here it was that Shelley, who not so long ago had scandalized the University of Oxford by his opinions, and society by his disregard of social conventionality, pitched his tent and attracted to his home men who were conspicuous in the political and intellectual rebellions of the day. The other figures who fill the foreground are equally remarkable. Mary Shelley was a charming and attractive personality, always tactful and sensible, at this time busy on the completion of her novel of *Frankenstein*, which was presently

to give her much literary reputation, reading Tacitus, Buffon, Rousseau and Gibbon, yet the most modest of women, nothing of a Blue-Stocking — an admirable wife and mother. Jane or—as she called herself—Claire Clairmont completed the home circle. She was a strange and tragic creature—ardent, wayward, and dark-eyed—the daughter of Godwin's second wife by a former marriage, only nineteen years of age, but with a daughter—Lord Byron's yet unacknowledged child—whose presence gave rise to much unpleasant gossip. Restless and emotional, Claire was happy at the piano, singing on summer days, with a voice “like a string of pearls.” Godwin, clever and ever impecunious, appeared at Albion House from time to time to the dismay of his daughter as much as of Shelley. Peacock, whose own home was close at hand, virile and genial—too genial sometimes for Mary's liking—was constantly in the house, dining, talking, and drinking his bottle. An untiring walker, he often led Shelley, who was a true lover of the

open air, on long rambles over the countryside.

“We took many walks,” Peacock writes in his *Memoirs of Shelley*, “in all directions from Marlow, saw everything worth seeing within a radius of sixteen miles. This comprehended . . . the spots which were consecrated by the memories of Cromwell, Hampden, and Milton in the Chiltern district of Buckinghamshire.” Sometimes they walked even to London, crossing by field paths and woodland lanes over the high lands to Uxbridge, and thence along the main road to the metropolis. Though Shelley enjoyed these long walks, “boating,” says Leigh Hunt in his autobiography, “was his great amusement. He loved the mixture of action and repose, and delighted to fancy himself gliding away to utopian isles and bowers of enchantment.” In fact, at Marlow Shelley showed himself to be a healthy and normal creature—working hard and playing hard. If he occupied many hours with intellectual labour, he equally enjoyed sociable and friendly recreation. One is re-

minded of those scenes of quiet, domestic, middle-class pleasures—such as Morland has depicted in his Tea Garden—when we recall some of the excursions from Marlow which Shelley joined. When Godwin visited him, a family party would sometimes be seen on the river, and more than once during the summer, as is recorded in Godwin's diary, a party composed of Mary, Jane Clairmont, and Godwin and his wife, with Shelley and Peacock as oarsmen, worked their way up stream past Bisham and its ancient church to the reaches by Hurley to Medmenham. Godwin tells us that their talk was of "novels and perfectibility." One may suspect it was mostly that of Godwin who, always intellectually alert, liked to explain his schemes of social regeneration rather than silently note on the passing bank the flowers of the willow herb and the wild rose. Occasionally, when Peacock and Shelley preferred a walking expedition, Mary and her father would drive in a gig to some historical shrine such as Hampden, and there meet the walkers.

Sometimes, the group at Albion House would be joined by Leigh Hunt, who, cheerful and ardent, escaping from editorial work on the *Examiner* in London, where he had already been imprisoned for a libel on the Prince Regent, joined sometimes in an excursion on the Thames to Medmenham, and with his wife paid the Shelleys a long visit in September. Horace Smith, of Rejected Addresses fame, also found his way to Marlow.

The last among the habitués of Albion House was Thomas Hogg, a future biographer of Shelley, his college friend and collaborator in the publications which caused their expulsion from Oxford. Like Peacock he was an active pedestrian, and used to walk to Marlow from London, and join Peacock and Shelley in their rambles when, in the summer of 1817, he was completing his terms as a law student—Law, Greek, and newspaper reading, he once said, were the essentials of a satisfactory day, and he enjoyed philosophical discussions. With his speculative theories and his Hellenism he

added not a little to the distinction of the coterie of which Peacock and Leigh Hunt were the practical members.

Albion House became a focus of the young radicalism of the early nineteenth century, a time of marked reaction, just two years after the Battle of Waterloo. The atmosphere was brilliant yet homely, schemes of political and social reform were mooted, plans for the breaking of the fetters of conventionalism were discussed, and when the friends were tired of this kind of argument they turned to criticism of ancient and modern literature. It was a typical group of modernists of the time in which the influence of the feminist movement and of Mary Wolstoncraft was as obvious as the revolt against the pervading Toryism in politics and society, exemplified in the administration of Lord Liverpool. To these gatherings in his home Shelley would return in summer evenings from his dreamings among the backwaters of Hurley, or the wooded heights of Bisham, dressed in odd garments, his head wreathed in wild flowers.

"My elf," Mary Shelley might well call him. Yet, he had plenty of sound practical sense which showed itself in unexpected ways, as in methodical lists of the poor laceworkers whom he helped with gifts, and in the way in which when he distributed among them soldiers' blankets, he had these articles carefully stamped with his name to prevent them from being pawned.

But it is during the warm summer days, —for it was a hot season—on the Thames and in the woods which clothed the higher ground above it, that we like to picture Shelley. Still, intellectually and emotionally, the river and its landscape had little effect on him. Throughout the summer he was working on the long poem, which at first called *Laon and Cythna*, was altered and renamed the *Revolt of Islam*. But the subject has no affinity with the characteristics of the locality where it was written, and was almost as much a tract for the times, as his pamphlet, which is usually known as "*Proposal for Putting Reforms to the Vote throughout the United Kingdom*"

by the Hermit of Marlow. Only in the touching dedication of the poem to his wife do we obtain a glimpse of Shelley's Thames-side haunts :—

So now my summer task is ended Mary
And I return to thee mine own heart's home ;
are the lines with which the poem begins.

Then he continues :—

The toil which stole from thee so many an hour
Is ended—and the fruit is at thy feet.
No longer where the woods to frame a bower
With interlaced branches mix and meet,
Or where with sound like many voices sweet,
Waterfalls leap among wild islands green
Which framed for my lone boat a lone retreat
But beside thee, where still my heart has ever been.

When in June days one escapes from the sunlight into the cool shades of the spreading chestnut trees which overhang the backwaters of Hurley, it needs no gift of imagination to picture Shelley in his boat "where the interlaced branches mix and meet."

Here and there in the same poem and in some of the few other pieces which were written during this summer, we find some descriptions of Thames scenery, scraps of

recollection of some phase of landscape, as in the lines :—

the flood
Grew tranquil as a woodland river
Winding through hills in solitude,

which well describe the Thames below Marlow.

The white green light, which, shifting overhead
Some tangled bower of vines around me shed,

has been idly watched by those who have passed pleasant hours beneath overhanging willows in the reaches of Bisham and Bourne End. And there are many to whom the lines :—

Sometimes between the wide and flowering meadows
Mile after mile we sailed, and 'twas delight
To see far off the sunbeams chase the shadows
Over the grass ;

will recall middays in June anywhere between Oxford and Windsor.

But nowhere do the details of the scenery of the Thames reach Shelley's heart and cause him to express through the medium of poetry the vibrating and complex emotions stirred in so many hearts by the sight or

memory of this English river. These feelings belong to a later generation, and it was left to Matthew Arnold, and to Robert Bridges, to voice them.

And on this side the island, where the pool
Eddies away, are tangled mass on mass
The water weeds, that net the fisher cool,
And scarce allow a narrow stream to pass ;
Where spreading crowfoot mars
The drowning nenuphars,
Waving the tassels of her silken grass
Below her silver stars.

Shelley did not thus note with affectionate keenness the water lily and the crowfoot. His imagination and his thoughts carried him far out of and beyond the river and the woodland, into gorgeous visions and dreams. Perhaps if he had lived longer by the Thames, less absorbed in one piece of work, something of the peculiar charm of the river might in maturer days have touched some inner chord. But these never came and the serener hour looked for at Marlow soon departed. "Alas!" Gray once wrote to Beattie from Cambridge in midwinter, "I am a summer bird and can only sit drooping

till the sun returns." The sun was as essential to Shelley as to Gray, but he did not wait quietly for its return. His impatient and restless spirit, made more restless by the completion of his summer task, urged him to escape from the mists of the Thames Valley, and winter gave him a dislike to Marlow. Besides, he was troubled by his health, and greatly vexed by debts,—more than once he was even afraid of being arrested.¹ Nor could he overcome his disappointment at the deprivation of his elder children, and both he and Mary missed the friends who had passed so many of the summer days in his house—"Social enjoyment in some form is the Alpha and the Omega of existence," he wrote to Peacock from Italy in 1819. The imminence of a change disturbed the winter circle, his

¹ Leigh Hunt admits in his autobiography that Shelley gave him £1,400 to get him out of debt; when this gift was made and whether in one sum or in several amounts Hunt does not say. But was probably before or during the Marlow period, and may account for Shelley's extreme financial difficulties at the end of 1817.

habitual restlessness increased and his wife now disliked her home, and so in the spring Shelley and his group passed out of the life of the riverside town. The green islets saw him no more and he no longer strode—loose-limbed and bright-eyed—on the wooded heights. Yet that Marlow is by this episode in Shelley's life indelibly associated with a phase of the intellectual life of England in the nineteenth century cannot be gainsaid, though to most of those who pass now among these scenes the story of Shelley and of his Circle at Marlow is strangely unfamiliar.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHENIES AND THE RUSSELLS.

THE peculiar charm of Chenies is to some extent departing, though it can never be entirely lost ; but as by reason of quicker communication with London the valley of the Chess and the village of Chenies must necessarily become less primitive and rural, so the contrast between the idyllic quiet and cheerful beauty of the place, and the lives of the Russells who are buried in the church—who were essentially men of affairs—must be less striking. This contrast was—and, indeed, still is—one of the peculiar characteristics of Chenies. That the poet Gray should be buried among the elms of Stoke Poges is in accord with the fitness of things ; that politicians and statesmen, all belonging to the same family, should from generation

to generation be buried in this quiet village church, brings into a vivid light the characteristics of a notable family, and of a village peculiarly English in its beauty and peace. Froude has well observed that it forms, with its church, its mansion, and its cottages, "a piece of ancient England, artificially preserved from the intrusion of modern ways."

With the Metropolitan Railway passing by Rickmansworth and Chorleywood these "modern ways" will soon largely alter this piece of "ancient England." Thus, he who desires to obtain as much as possible of the aroma of peaceful country will do well to work his way on foot up the valley of the Chess, from Rickmansworth. He will, it is true, miss the pleasant turf-lined road which leads up from Chorleywood Station; but instead he will see the Chess rippling down under alders and past beech-covered heights, and he will approach the village on its most charming side. He will reach it by an avenue of ancient elms, and on the other side of the road he will see the way to the manor-house and the church.

There is little architectural interest in the structure of the church, though it contains some interesting medieval brasses, and it is quite unconnected with the remnant of the old manor-house, with its warm red tints and sunny terrace. This house was rebuilt by the first Lord Russell in the reign of Henry VIII. ; before his time it was the old manor-house of the Sapcotes, before Chenies passed into the possession of the first Earl of Bedford. Like the manor-house of Stoke Poges, it was visited by Queen Elizabeth, and it helps by its appearance and its position not a little to carry us back into the days of ancient England. Of the first Earl of Bedford, of whom I have just spoken, Froude has written ; in a few pages he has graphically described the successful career of this capable man, and how his wife, the Lady Anne, "was the daughter of Sir Guy Sapcote of Huntingdonshire. Her mother was a Cheney, and through her the Cheneys estate fell to its present owners. She had been twice married, and twice a widow, when her hand

was sought by Sir John Russell." It was this Lady Anne who in 1556, two years after the death of her husband, and in pursuance of his will, built the Russell Chapel, wherein her husband was laid to rest, and where she also lies. They are commemorated by an admirable monument, the finest in the chapel, and a worthy specimen of Renaissance work and of an age before monumental sculpture in England had lost its dignity and beauty, and degenerated into the florid details which characterized the sculpture of a later age. It would be impossible to describe it better than Mr. Froude has done. "The material," he writes, in his essay on "Cheneys and the House of Russell" (p. 492), "is alabaster, the pink veins in the stone being abundant enough to give a purple tint to the whole construction. The workmanship is extremely elaborate, and belongs to a time when the temper of men was still manly and stern, and when the medieval reverence for death was still unspoiled by insincerity and affectation. The hands are

folded in the old manner. The figures are not represented as sleeping, but as in a trance, with the eyes wide open. The faces are evidently careful likenesses: the Earl has lost an eye in action—the lid droops over the socket as in life. His head rests on his corslet, his sword is at his side. He wears a light coronet, and his beard falls low on his breast. The features do not denote a man of genius, but a loyal and worthy servant of the State, cautious, prudent, and thoughtful! The lady's face is more remarkable, and it would seem, from the pains which have been taken with it, that the artist must have personally known and admired her, while the Earl he may have known only by his portrait. The forehead of the Lady Anne is strong and broad, the nose large, the lips full but severely and expressively closed. She looks upward as she lies, with awe, but with a bold heart, stern as a Roman matron. The head is on a cushion, but the Earl's baldrick would have formed as suitable a pillow for a figure so commanding and so

powerful." Thus the Russell Chapel at Chenies enables us not only to follow the fortunes of a great historic family, one which always had some representative mingling in national affairs from the time of Henry VIII. to the present day, but in a small space it gives us an epitome of English monumental sculpture.

The degeneracy of artistic taste can be gauged by a comparison of the fine monument of the first Earl and his wife with that of Duke William, his wife, and his many children. While this immense monument is not without some merit, more especially as regards the portraiture in the bas-reliefs, and has a particular interest in consequence of the central representation of Lord William Russell, its realism and its ornamentation well exemplify the character of the sculpture of the seventeenth century, when it was erected. Thus, in a few paces—from one end of the chapel to the other—we note an artistic contrast, which the proximity of the several works and the absence of architectural details in the building, leaving as it does all

the attention of the observer on the tombs, makes more vivid. We then come through various phases of art to the monuments of our own day, when monumental sculpture, from an artistic point of view, has little value. The memory of Earl Russell—Lord John Russell, as he will remain in the pages of the historian—is kept alive by two slabs of black marble and four white pillars. One slab is on the floor, the other rests on the pillars, and on the latter a brass plate with a lengthy inscription is fixed, on the former rests an Earl's coronet. If the upper slab had supported an effigy of Earl Russell, there would have been reason for it, but, as it is, it is a misuse of material, and shows a complete want of purpose. On the wall above is the small bas-relief with a portrait of Lord Ampthill (best remembered as Lord Odo Russell), which has been placed there since his burial in 1884. It possesses, indeed, the merit of absolute simplicity ; but valuable as this virtue is, the work is characterized by poverty of ideas and of execution when contrasted with the earliest

monuments in the chapel. But whatever be their faults or their merits, these two monuments are interesting as carrying on the historical and artistic interest of the Russell Chapel.

Both monuments, too, mark the continuity of the characteristics which for three centuries the great Whig family have shown. If the first Earl of Bedford was essentially a statesman and a diplomatist, of the two men whom the latest monuments commemorate, the one was a statesman and the other a diplomatist. Neither was a man of transcendent power, but each was an eminent public servant who deserved well of his country. From the first Earl to the last who lies in Chenies Chapel there was not a genius to be found amongst them ; but a high standard of capacity, a power of public usefulness and of patriotic service, has characterized the family from its beginning. To a man—be he Tory, Whig, or Radical—who has the least care for the history of his country, the course of such a family must be full of interest. It is one of the peculiar attractions of the chapel

at Chenies that it groups around us for the moment the past representatives of the Russells, and enables us to see at the same moment the features of the modern diplomatist who in very trying times represented Great Britain at the capital of the German Empire, and of the statesman who, three centuries before, had been a trusted servant of Henry VIII., and who had transacted the business of his country from one end of Europe to the other.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MEMORIAL BRASSES OF PENN'S COUNTRY.

THE dominant note of the foregoing pages is the personal association of great men of letters and of statesmen with places around which memories of them will continue to linger for generations to come. The same note, though in a less individual way, is to be found in a study of the memorial brasses which are attached to the floors and walls of most of the churches in Penn's Country. These monuments are a lasting link between men and women, whose names are unknown in history, and the localities in which their lives were passed. These people are without fame, but in their age they played their parts, undistinguished though they were,

and their memorials recall the society of three centuries of English life. Effigies such as these, for we are not now concerned with mere inscriptions—are an epitome of the people of the past, and they introduce us alike to the country gentleman—the knight of post - Conquest times — the ecclesiastic, and the civilian who is sometimes a man of business. None of these monuments are technically of the first importance, but they are quite a representative collection, extending over three centuries, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth, illustrating the rise and the decline of this particular art, the most closely identified with the life of Medieval England. They chiefly personify what would now be called the middle class, for nowhere in South Buckinghamshire do we see depicted the lineaments of a great feudal lord. The district was one occupied by small land-owners whose names survive only in the present designations of localities, from which the several families obtained their surnames. The London merchant was also associated with the county. The earliest and perhaps

most admirable of the South Buckinghamshire brasses is that of Nichole de Aumberdene in Taplow Church. On his monument he is described as "jadis pessoner de Londres": his figure is set in the floriated open head of a slender cross with a long stem which rests on a dolphin. The date is *c.* 1340 and one may suppose that de Aumberdene had retired to some Thames-side home after a prosperous career in London. At Datchet we find a brass to another London merchant more than two centuries later (1593), that to Richard Hanbury, citizen and goldsmith, and Alice his wife, and their two daughters. A comparison of these two monuments will show the difference between the early and later art. The primitive monument with its simple cross is devotional in expression and purpose, the other with its shields of arms, and the arms of London between Tudor roses, reflects success in this world.

At Wooburn we meet with the pious founder in John Godwyn (1488) and his wife, who were "first founders of the Stepull of

Obourne Deyncourt." ¹ There, too, we come in contact with the Whartons, at one time noblemen who lived in much magnificence at Wooburn and whose glory departed in the eighteenth century amidst scandal and bankruptcy. A monument—a small and attractive little plate—represents an altar tomb and the figure of a child, Arthur, the infant son of Philip, Lord Wharton (1641).

At Great Hampden, at Penn, and at Stoke Poges are brasses of members of the families of Hampden, of Penn, and of Molyns, bringing us into touch with more than one generation of country gentlemen who lived quietly in the remote Chiltern woodlands, and are the most typical of the more influential dwellers in the country of which the village of Penn may be regarded as a centre.

At several places, as at Chalfont St. Giles, Chenies, and Denham, we find figures of ecclesiastics. At Denham also is one of an abbess, Agnes Jordan, last abbess of Syon (1544), reminding us that, if we could re-

¹ The remains of the old Manor House of the Deyncourt family is a little west of the Church.

visit the mediæval scene, we should see in the river valleys—at Medmenham, Little Marlow, Burnham, and Missenden—monasteries and nunneries, reposeful centres of religion and primitive culture.

Eton, with its local individuality, can scarcely be accurately comprised in the district which forms the subject of this book. Yet it is so near to Stoke Poges and the Buckinghamshire uplands that it cannot be omitted from this sketch. There are in the Chapel of Henry VII. a company of scholars as in the sixteenth century brasses of Henry Bost, Roger Lupton, and Thomas Barker Provosts and Vice-Provost of the College—not to mention names of others who are there commemorated. This gathering is unique, for nowhere else in England do we find anything quite like this group of monuments which help to illustrate the long history of the famous foundation to which those whom they represent once belonged.

In some churches are many now unnamed brasses, as in that of Chalfont St. Giles, where there is a group of unidentified monu-

ments. In spite of this they are far from uninteresting, since they present a pictorial epitome of rural society in the Middle Ages. At Hedgerley is the fine brass to Margaret Bulstrode (1540), and at Denham we can see another palimpsest brass.

Those who habitually enjoy the study of monumental brasses find interest in details and in differences of workmanship and of costume. But to many, a passing glance at a brass in a somewhat dim light is scarcely more than a formal act in the course of a visit to an ancient church. The fact is that brasses should, by all those who are not interested in their technical details, be regarded in relation to the traditions and the history of the locality in which they remain. There is considerable similarity between the general characteristics, whether of figure or of dress, of most English brasses. Their historical and living interest is relative. They are often the only means left to us of obtaining in some tangible form a view of the people who long ago lived in the manor house or officiated in the village church. They de-

pict a past social background. And when we have viewed with some precision the great men who in later years are associated with what has in previous chapters been termed Penn's Country, a study of the brasses in the several churches recreates in shadowy form the generations which preceded those whose names are famous in history or in letters.

CHAPTER XVI.

COWPER'S HOMES—OLNEY AND WESTON UNDERWOOD.

A KNOWLEDGE of the places where some poets have lived adds largely, not only to the pleasure which is derived from their verse, but to a juster critical appreciation of their work. The influence of the scenery of the Thames Valley on Milton, of the rural charm of Stoke Poges on Gray has been touched on in preceding pages and we should know Olney and Weston Underwood if we would completely understand Cowper.¹ His range of thought and his poetical capacity

¹ See Appendix, Note K. Olney and Weston Underwood are many miles from Penn's Country but for the reader of the preceding pages on Milton, Waller, Gray, and Shelley a few words on Cowper's homes may be acceptable.

are so much narrower than either of the two poets I have just named, his insight into the human heart and mind is so much more limited, and the charm of not a little of his verse arises so entirely from delicate painting of scenery and animal life, that not to know Olney and its neighbourhood is to lose some of the essence of Cowper's work.

More than any other English poet Cowper is inseparably connected with one particular place, for Weston Underwood is so close to Olney (and while Cowper lived at Olney it was so often the object of his daily walk) that the time which he passed at Olney and at Weston may be regarded as one period.

For eight-and-twenty years Olney and this adjoining village were Cowper's home. The character of a particular locality dwelt in for a long time, and the habits of its people, could scarcely fail to affect vitally the life and the mind of a sensitive and impressionable man. But Cowper was so morbidly sensitive that Olney did more than merely cause its scenery and the ways of the place and people to be faithfully reflected in his

poems. A man of wider range of thought and interest would have felt its influence less ; as it was, it deeply affected his life. In Arnold's " Scholar Gipsy " and in his " Thyrsis " we perceive how the feeling of early summer among the meadows of the Upper Thames, of the river scenery and of the evenings on the Cumnor Hills, has been thoroughly absorbed, and has coloured portions of his poetry. But the silent meadows and the solitary poplars by the Ouse, the quiet streets and the little gardens of Olney, the dreary winter mists and the minute occurrences of the uneventful day—the morning letter and the cheerful tea—the religious and the social habits of his neighbours, permeated Cowper's being. Their influence could not be thrown off, and their effect was permanent. For his happiness it would have been well if he had never known Olney ; his sprightly mind, and his obvious need of comradeship and company, made a large and busy town the place where he would best—for his own content—have spent his days. Like many men, he did not

thoroughly know himself. "I have not a leg that is not tied to Olney," he wrote to Mr. Hill in 1780; "and if they all were at liberty, not one of them all would hop to London. The thought of it distresses me, the sight of it would craze me." Yet he rejoiced in the bright company of Lady Hesketh and Lady Austen, and would have received new life from the interchange of wit among the literary men who were gathered together in London at the end of the eighteenth century.

It has been fortunate for English literature that fate willed that Cowper's life should be passed among country scenes. It was a mind such as his, impressionable to a degree, which was required to reflect the minute traits, whether of society or of landscape, which marked the character of Olney. He has consequently given English literature miniatures of the most charming kind, painted with inimitable faithfulness, and with a delicacy of touch to find the equal of which before Cowper's time we must go back to the work of an earlier poet, to the fresh

scenes of West Country life which we owe to the genius of Herrick.

Again, Cowper himself, as drawn in his poems and his letters, and his Olney friends Mr. Newton and the Unwins, form together an ever-living picture. They exemplify a phase of English life and character at the end of the eighteenth century of continual interest and value.

But without the simple High Street of Olney, its church by the stream, and the prim houses and thatched cottages of Weston, Cowper and his circle would be figures without a background and a picture without colour. Fortunately for the realization of this picture, Olney in the eighteenth century differed little from Olney as it is to-day. We walk along the High Street, with its monotonous but tidy grey stone houses interspersed with small cottages till it ends in the market-place, a kind of enlargement of the street itself, from which two smaller branches go forth at either corner. At the north-east end Cowper's house at once attracts us, standing above more lowly dwell-

ings, with its dark high-pitched roof, its warm brick sides broken by eight windows on each floor. It looks down on a deeply-thatched cottage which stands in the row of houses opposite to it, and on the old pollarded elm in the centre of the market-place, just as it did when Cowper went in and out. The same striking quiet still pervades the place, broken only by the passing of a farmer in his rattling gig, or the shouts of men driving fat oxen from the meadows.

Imagination is not needed to realize the picture ; it is easy to see the Olney of the past in the Olney of to-day. We can still walk in the little garden behind the house, divided as it now is into two parts. The summer-house, the "trees that meet, no barren interval between," the bright sun-flowers, the trailing and many-coloured peas, the clumps of sweet-william, and the surrounding houses cutting off the world, need only the long-departed figures to live again to blot out the years that intervene between Cowper's age and our own.

It is but a step from the market-place
down Bridge Street to the bridge

That with its wearisome but needful length
Bestrides the wintry flood.

We pass on our way near the comfortable vicarage, fronted by trees and backed by an extending garden, where Mr. Newton lived, that model of a repentant sinner, whose eventful life and strength of character, in their contrast with the even monotony and excessive dependence of Cowper's nature, are not the least interesting features in the picture of Olney.

We come to the narrow bridge spanning with several arches the divided Ouse, which moves slowly through the meadows with its surface disturbed only when a dace or a gudgeon breaks the muddy water to seize an unlucky fly. The poplars by the side of the stream with tremulous leaves half hide the church, and the hum of the water-mill below is the only sound. To the cheerful mind this is but a pleasant quiet, with all the "live murmur of a summer day," but it might at times be overwhelmingly oppres-

sive to a man like Cowper when in the mood to describe himself as

A stricken deer that left the herd long since.

Then to him Olney was not a place removed from the turmoil of the world ; it was "a well" from which there was no escape.

If we would take another way than this, we may pass along the highroad to Weston Underwood, where Cowper in his brightest moods found

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirit.

We ascend the gentle hill which is formed by a side of the valley ; above us are the elms of Weston Underwood ; on the other hand, the valley with the sinuous Ouse widening in the distance. The green meadows, the feeding cattle, and the gleam of winding water, form in summer-time a pleasant picture. If we pause on the ascent, we see, behind the long arched bridge, the blunted spire emulating the straight poplars at the hill-foot, the chimneys and the roofs of Olney.

How oft upon yon eminence our pace
Has slackened to a pause, and we have borne
The ruffling wind, scarce conscious that it blew,
While admiration, feeding at the eye
And still unsated, dwelt upon the scene !
Thence with what pleasure have we just discerned
The distant plough slow moving, and beside
His lab'ring team, that swerved not from the track,
The sturdy swain diminished to a boy !
Here Ouse slow winding through a level plain
Of spacious meads, with cattle sprinkled o'er,
Conducts the eye along his sinuous course
Delighted. There, fast-rooted in their bank
Stand, never over-looked, our fav'rite elms,
That screen the herdsman's solitary hut ;
While far beyond, and over thwart the stream
That, as with molten glass, inlays the vale,
The sloping land recedes into the clouds ;
Displaying on its varied side the grace
Of hedgerow beauties numberless, square tow'r,
Tall spire, from which the sound of cheerful bells
Just undulates upon the list'ning ear,
Groves, heaths, and smoking villages remote.

This delightful picture is as true now as it was in Cowper's lifetime ; and it is such passages as this in his work which, amongst much that is archaic and uninteresting, have enduring literary value.

In about a mile the road falls into a little

dip of ground, crossing the tiny stream Hobrook, along the side of which runs the pathway to Cowper's Shrubbery and the Peasant's Nest :—

So thick beset with foliage of such dark redundant growth,

I called the low-roofed lodge the Peasant's Nest.

Ascending again, we are at Weston Underwood. On the right is the grove of elms and chestnuts, the favourite end of Cowper's and Mrs. Unwin's walk ; on the left are the iron gates that once formed the entrance to the grounds of Weston Hall. The hall is gone, but the stables still are left, with the shining vane above them moving with the wind, and a bit of building where the mansion stood. The now deserted grounds make their cheerful pleasantness in Cowper's time more marked. The village street is bright with flowers in the cottage gardens, and some deeply-thatched cottages break the line of sombre stone buildings. A waggoner is taking his glass of ale at Cowper's Oak ; a few paces beyond it we pass the house where the poet and Mrs. Unwin lived

when they left Olney in 1786. The grey house, with its numerous windows and the bright brass knocker, mark "the clean and comfortable abode" where the two friends lived in comparative happiness for nine years. At the end of the street the low-towered church within its graveyard seems to cut off the village from the outer world. It dominates the wide meadows of the Ouse, and the ground on which it stands projects somewhat into them; the fields beyond the village are lost by the formation of the ground, and so there seems to be on either side only the pretty and homely village and the dreary meadows.

From these descriptions of Olney and Weston Underwood it must be obvious that modern movements have not altered the scenery about these places; and it is unlikely that for years to come perceptible changes will take place. We can thus see for ourselves the truth of Cowper's verse. In this respect he is like his contemporary Crabbe, for he saw and described things as they were. But, unlike Crabbe, he does not seize upon

the worst aspects of Nature or of men, and depict them with the unfaltering ruthlessness of the dissector. There is a tenderness in his touch, and a sympathy for Nature in all her aspects, which throws a pleasant light over the minute realism of his works, and has given warmth to the unromantic scenery of Olney. Thus, it has been fortunate for English literature that chance took Cowper to Olney ; it needed a very impressionable nature thoroughly to absorb the comparatively trivial incidents of life about the Valley of the Ouse, but it has been Cowper's good fortune to leave us delightful and faithful pictures of a particular kind of English scenery which still exists, and of a phase of English life which has disappeared.

In relation to English literature, Cowper stands in some respects in the position that the Dutch masters do in the art of painting. As Teniers and Jan Steen have depicted the scenery and homely incidents of Holland, so Cowper has told of the meadows and the hedgerows of Weston, expressing the sympathy which exists between lovers of Nature

and the common birds and beasts of the field. His range, indeed, is narrow, but within it he greatly excels ; and, though it is a mistake to class him amongst the greatest of English poets, a portion of his work will always be among the classics of English literature. Nor are Olney and Weston, and the valley of the Ouse, with its meadows and poplars and silent waters, likely to lose their interest for the student of Cowper's poetry.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

NOTE A.

WILLIAM PENN was born October 14, 1644, in London. In 1660 he proceeded to Christ Church, Oxford. At the University he imbibed Puritan ideas, and in 1688 published a tract called "Truth Exalted." In 1670 he was tried at the Old Bailey for a breach of the Conventicle Act. In 1672 he married Gulielma Springett, who had been residing with her step-father Pennington at the Grange, Chalfont St. Peter. In 1681 he received a grant of a province in America, thereupon named Pennsylvania. In September, 1682, Penn sailed for America, and he returned in 1684. He was married for the second time in 1696. In September, 1699, he again sailed for America, whence he returned in 1702. He died on July 30, 1718, at Ruscombe, in Berkshire.

NOTE B.

JOHN MILTON was born in London (Bread Street, Cheapside), on December, 9, 1608. In 1620 he was admitted to St. Paul's School, and in 1625 to Christ's College, Cambridge. In 1632 he took the degree of M.A. Early in 1638 Milton left England for Italy. In 1643 he married Mary Powell, who died in 1654. In 1649 he was appointed Secretary of Foreign Tongues, and soon after began his polemical writings. He married again in 1656 and was left a

widower in 1658, he married for the third time in 1663. Milton was at Chalfont St. Giles in 1665, and "Paradise Lost" was published in 1667. Milton died on November 8, 1674.

NOTE C.

THOMAS GRAY was born in London in 1716. After being at school at Eton, he went up to Cambridge in 1734. The "Elegy" was begun at Stoke in 1742, and finished there in June, 1750, and published in 1751. He died at Cambridge on July 30, 1771.

NOTE D.

EDMUND BURKE was born in Dublin in 1728 or 1729. In 1743 he became a student at Trinity College, Dublin. He was married in 1756, and in the same year published his first literary work, "A Vindication of Natural Society". He entered Parliament in 1765 as member for Wendover. In 1780 he became Paymaster of the Forces on the formation of the Rockingham Ministry. He died at Beaconsfield, July 9, 1797.

NOTE E.

EDMUND WALLER was born at Coleshill, an outlying village of Hertfordshire, near Amersham, in 1605. He entered Parliament at sixteen as member for Amersham, but he soon retired to his estate at Beaconsfield, and gave himself up to literature. He again entered Parliament in 1625 as member for Chipping Wycombe, and in 1627 he was re-elected for Amersham. In 1643 he was arrested for his complicity for what is known in history as Waller's Plot,

and was fined £10,000 and banished. He lived in Paris till he was allowed by Cromwell to return to England in 1654. He died, after passing through an old age of much brightness, in 1687, at the age of eighty-two.

Waller was twice married. Between his first and second marriage he made love to Lady Dorothea Sidney, the Sacharissa of many of his poems, who did not, however, return the attachment, but who is nevertheless of more literary interest than either of Waller's wives.

NOTE F.

JOHN HAMPDEN was probably born in London in 1594. After being educated at Thame Grammar School, and Magdalen College, Oxford, he was called to the Bar. In 1619 he married, and took up his residence at his house at Great Hampden, his father having died in 1597. In the first three Parliaments of Charles I. he sat as member for Wendover. He was a steady opponent of the King in his attempts to raise money by illegal means, and his opposition to the levy of ship-money in 1635 made him, as Clarendon says, known beyond the bounds of Buckinghamshire, for which county he was member in the Short Parliament (April, 1640) and also in the Long Parliament. Hampden's actions during the few remaining years of his life are well-known matters of history. He died on June 25, 1643, from a wound received in a skirmish at Chalgrove Field, and was buried in the Church of Great Hampden.

NOTE G.

WILLIAM BENTINCK, first EARL OF PORTLAND, the date of whose birth is uncertain, began

his distinguished career by becoming page of honour to William Prince of Orange. He accompanied him to England in 1670. At the Revolution "he was the chief medium of communication between the Prince and the English nobility." He was created Earl of Portland in 1689. He arranged the Treaty of Ryswick in 1697. He died at Bulstrode, November 23, 1709.

NOTE H.

WILLIAM WYNDHAM, LORD GRENVILLE, was born in 1759, being first cousin of the younger Pitt. In 1782 he was chosen member for Buckingham. He early filled several political offices, and was elected Speaker of the House of Commons in 1789. In June of the same year he became Secretary of State in Pitt's Administration, and was shortly afterwards raised to the peerage, and transferred to the office of Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, which post he held to the end of the Administration. On the death of Pitt in 1806, Grenville formed the short-lived Government known historically as that of "All the Talents," comprising, as it did, Fox, Addington, and others, not of the same political party. He died in 1834.

For a sketch of Lord Grenville's personal and political life, see *Edinburgh Review*, October, 1888.

NOTE I.

ISAAC DISRAELI was born in London in 1766. In 1791 he published the "Curiosities of Literature," the work by which he is chiefly remembered, and died at Bradenham in 1848. BENJAMIN DISRAELI

was born in London in 1804. He was created Earl of Beaconsfield in 1876, and died in London in April, 1881.

NOTE J.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY was born on August 4, 1792. He was sent to Eton, and on April 10, 1810, matriculated at University College, Oxford, but in March, 1811, he was expelled from the college on account of his atheistical writings. On August 28, 1811, he married Harriet Westbrook, whom he left in July, 1814. After her death in December, 1816, he married (December 30) Mary Wolstonecraft Godwin, with whom he had lived since 1814. Shelley left England in March, 1818, and was drowned near Spezzia on July 8, 1822.

NOTE K.

WILLIAM COWPER was born at Berkhamsted, in Hertfordshire, in 1731. He was sent first to a private school, and subsequently to Westminster School. At eighteen he was articled to an attorney in London. He was subsequently called to the Bar. In 1763 he was afflicted with a mental disorder, but recovered after three years of illness, and then went to live at Huntingdon, where he became acquainted with the Rev. William Unwin and his wife. He subsequently lived at Olney and Weston Underwood, and died April 25, 1800, at East Dereham.

ITINERARY.

PENN.

From BEACONSFIELD STATION, 3 miles.

JORDANS.

From CHALFONT ST. GILES, 2 miles.

„ GERRARD'S CROSS STATION, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

„ BEACONSFIELD STATION, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

THE CHALFONTS.

ST. GILES, from CHALFONT ROAD, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

ST. PETER, from GERRARD'S CROSS, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

ST. PETER, from CHALFONT ROAD, $5\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

STOKE POGES.

From SLOUGH, $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

BULSTRODE.

From UXBRIDGE, 5 miles.

„ SLOUGH, $6\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

„ GERRARD'S CROSS STATION, 1 mile.

DROPMORE.

From TAPLOW, 4 miles.

BEACONSFIELD.

From the Station, $\frac{1}{2}$ mile.

„ CHALFONT ST. GILES, 4 miles.

BRADENHAM.

From WEST WYCOMBE, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

HUGHENDEN.

From HIGH WYCOMBE, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

HAMPDEN.

From GREAT MISSENDEN, 3 miles.

CHENIES.

From RICKMANSWORTH, 4 miles.

„ CHORLEY WOOD, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

WESTON UNDERWOOD.

From OLNEY, 2 miles.

The above distances are by road ; they may sometimes be shortened by footpaths and bridle-roads.

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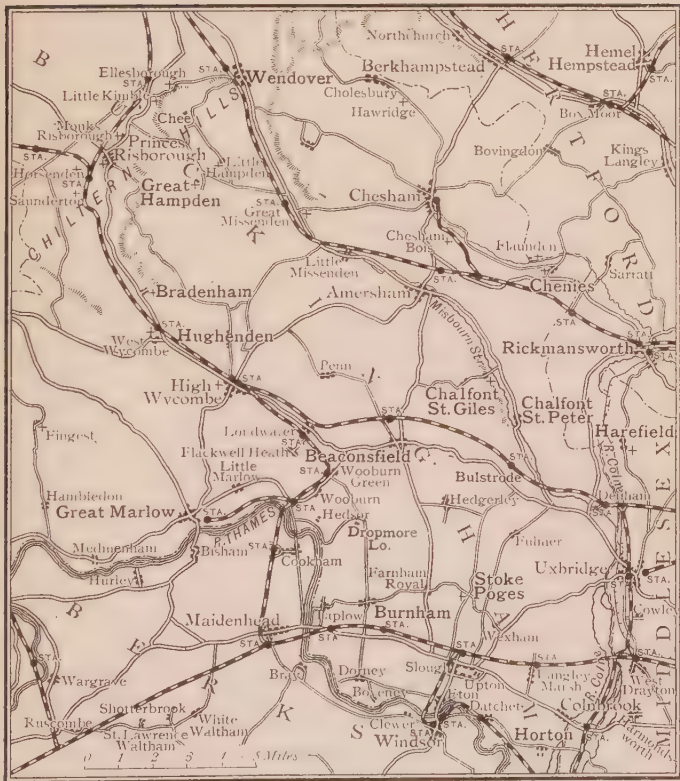
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